



Module 4

Working relationships

For suggestions on how to get the most out of these self-study materials, see the booklet on 'Using the materials'.

Preface to Governance Training Materials

At the time of writing the Governance Training Modules, the **Education Act 2011** had been implemented. It abolished the Young People's Learning Agency, with funding for colleges now being administered by either the Education Funding Agency and / or the Skills Funding Agency. It significantly reduced the complexity of colleges' Instrument and Articles of Government, giving them greater flexibility to run their own affairs. The details are included in Schedule 12 of the Act which makes a number of amendments to prior legislation. Section 29b of Schedule 12 states that "the governing body of the institution may modify or replace its instrument of government and articles of government". These must however comply with certain requirements set out in Part 2 of Schedule 4, thereby retaining some of the key responsibilities previously enshrined in legislation. In some cases, the statutory provision for sixth form colleges differs from that of general further education (GFE) colleges with the **Department for Education (DfE)** overseeing the former and the **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)** the latter; however all colleges will now be actively considering the changes that affect them and all governors will need to be aware of the implications for their own organisation. At the same time as the Education Act 2011 was passed into law, the Association of Colleges published **The English Colleges' Foundation Code of Governance**.

This voluntary code of practice was developed by the sector following extensive consultation and all GFE colleges have been encouraged formally to adopt it. It has the full support of the government and is seen as "an important milestone in making colleges more locally accountable and in freeing them to respond more effectively to local learners, employers and community partners".

The government's reform plan for the further education and skills system was set out in **New Challenges, New Chances** published on 1 December 2011 and further refined in **Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills** published in April 2013. A **summary of NCNC** is available from LSIS. In November 2011 the final report of the Independent Commission on Colleges in their Communities, **A Dynamic Nucleus**, was published. Alongside New Challenges, New Chances, these two documents establish the foundation for the future development of the further education and skills sector.

The 2013 version of the Governance Training materials incorporate these significant changes to the operation of further education but all governors are recommended to familiarise themselves with and take account of the key documents referred to in this preface. The materials enshrine the six principles set out in the Good Governance Standard for Public Services by the Independent Commission on **Good Governance in Public Services** (2005), to which all governing bodies are referred.

The **Association of Colleges** has also compiled a **Governance Resource Library** which provides a wide range of online resources for governors and which will usefully complement these materials.

The **Learning and Skills Improvement Service** which has produced these updated and much valued governance training modules will cease to exist after August 2013. It is hoped the essential updating of these resources will be regularly carried out by other existing organisations or newly-emerging ones.

Acknowledgements

The first edition of these training materials was published by the Further Education Funding Council in 2000 and further updated and amended in 2002 following the establishment of the Learning and Skills Council in 2002. They were commissioned by LSC in 2002 under the Standards Fund and produced by a partnership of national organisations involved in further education.

This third edition of the training materials has been published by **The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)**, as part of the **Leadership Skills for Governance** programme, and incorporates the changes brought about by the Education Act 2011 and government policy initiatives as at January 2013.

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Feedback on the modules should be sent to fegovernance@lsis.org.uk

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Introduction

This module explores a range of models, theories and practical techniques for managing relationships with other people in organisations. In a survey of governors asking what these training materials should include, a very high percentage said that building up successful working relationships was a key factor in being an effective governor.

All governors have a collective responsibility to contribute towards making sure the governing body conducts its business efficiently, operates within its powers and follows procedures. Good working relationships are key to this role.

Effective group interaction, team-working and harmonious relationships are essential to the productivity of any organisation. In order for groups and teams to function well within organisations, everyone needs to feel valued and to respect the feelings and emotions of the other group and team members. Each person needs to look at his or her own behaviour and the effect it has upon others, as well as understanding the behaviour of others and the effect that has upon him or herself.

Achieving a balance is not always easy. There are several ideas and techniques that you can use to help you analyse your own and other people's approaches to building effective professional relationships, and to decide on practical steps to improve effectiveness in working with other people, building on your previous experience and expertise. The principal, clerk and Chair each play a crucial role in providing professional support and guidance.

Aims

By the end of this module you should be able to:

- apply assertiveness skills to help manage difficult situations;
- identify common barriers to communication and discuss strategies to help;
- consider the diversity of perspectives and interests represented on the governing body and strategies to help a sense of common purpose;
- explain key processes and skills for working with groups and teams; and
- analyse skills for self-management and apply these to your own interactions.

Contents

Mark the sections you want to study and tick them off as you complete them.

To do	Done		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 1	Dealing with difficult situations
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 2	Communication
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 3	Power, influence and politics
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 4	Working with groups and teams
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 5	Managing self

Working on the self-study activities

These materials have been designed for flexible use, so that you can work through sections and activities in your own time and at your own pace if you would find it difficult to attend external training sessions. Governors who have tested these materials point out the value of working on at least some of the suggested activities together with another governor or group of governors, as there is much potential to learn from each other's experience. You might find it useful to become involved in a local or regional governor's network in which the training materials might be used.

What you will need

To complete some of the activities in this module you will need to carry out the following additional tasks outside the module workbook. You may choose to discuss these tasks with, for example, your Chair of governors and clerk, and complete the tasks individually and collectively as part of an agreed governing body self-evaluation exercise.

- Section 2 activity: analysing how your governing body communicates
- Section 4 activity: observing group and team interactions
- Section 4 activity: reviewing group and team skills

Section 1

Dealing with difficult situations

Managing relationships and behaviours with professional detachment requires a degree of self-awareness, skill and sensitivity in dealing with other people. This kind of working environment throws up a whole range of pressures on the day-to-day relationships that governors need to maintain.

A key aspect of managing relationships is being honest, open and direct. This is the core of assertive behaviour, which we look at more closely in this section.

Different types of behaviour

Assertiveness – clear, honest and open communication – can help to reduce stress in interactions with other people. To understand what assertiveness is we must, first of all, be clear about what it is not. The checklist below gives examples of three different styles of behaviour which are not assertive: aggressive, indirect and submissive. Most of us tend to vary our style of communication depending on the circumstances and who we are talking to. Sometimes, however, an individual consistently uses a style which gets in the way of genuine dialogue.

Behaviour checklist

Aggressive behaviour is directed at satisfying the individual's needs without taking into account the needs and feelings of others. Examples include:

- making other people's decisions for them;
- making decisions without taking account of the views of people affected by them;
- 'putting down' other people who don't agree with your point of view;
- interrupting a lot;
- blaming someone else when things go wrong; or
- arguing for the sake of it.

Non-assertive behaviour is directed at satisfying the needs and feelings of others while concealing or denying your own. **Indirect or manipulative behaviour** is one form of hiding your own needs and feelings – examples include:

- making other people's decisions for them while trying to make them feel they have made their own;
- appearing to consult but making your own decision in the end; using flattery to get what you want;
- making other people feel guilty;
- dropping hints rather than saying directly what you mean;
- sidetracking the other person away from something you don't want to deal with; or
- criticising someone or sabotaging their efforts behind their back.

Submissive or passive behaviour is a form of **non-assertive behaviour** in which the individual denies their own needs. Examples include:

- allowing others to make decisions for you;
- keeping quiet about what you really want so the other person doesn't realise how important it is to you;
- being persuaded into something against your will;
- complaining behind the scenes about not getting what you want, without saying it directly to the person concerned; or
- avoiding confrontation by trying to smooth things over that really need to be dealt with.

Activity

Reviewing different styles of behaviour

1. Use the bullet points above to analyse your own style of behaviour. You may also find it useful to analyse the styles of people with whom you work, especially those individuals with whom you sometimes have difficulty communicating.
2. How do you tend to react to each of these styles of behaviour in other people? How do colleagues react?

Viewpoint

Doing this activity may give you fresh insight into your own or someone else's behaviour. An individual who tends towards one particular style may do this deliberately to block honest communication, or may be completely unaware of their behaviour and its effect on other people.

We each tend to respond differently to unhelpful styles of behaviour in other people. One person may respond to aggressive behaviour, for example, by becoming more submissive to avoid conflict while another person may react by getting more confrontational themselves. This can set up a vicious circle in meetings. Individuals in a group / team may establish a pattern of behaving and responding to each other's behaviour that gets in the way of productive discussion.

Assertive behaviour enables an exchange to take place with another person based on openness, directness, and mutual respect. It involves negotiation on how the different needs and feelings of both people might be met. There are specific strategies, which can help us to feel more assertive:

- Respect the other person's rights to express opinions, make mistakes, make decisions, change their minds AND
- Expect the same respect for your own rights.
- Be specific, say what you would like to happen:
 - keep to the point
 - keep it short
 - persist if this is appropriate.

- Let the other person know how you feel in a neutral way:
 - use 'I' to talk about needs and feelings 'I feel frustrated because....'
 - give confident explanations rather than being apologetic or self-deprecating
 - repeat an important point calmly rather than getting frustrated or sarcastic.
- Listen to and acknowledge the other person:
 - show you are listening by nodding, making eye contact, taking notes
 - ask questions rather than responding with statements
 - summarise what the other person has said, when appropriate.

We will now look at how you can use an understanding of behaviour styles to develop your own skills in this area.

Activity

Analysing your own behaviour styles

Think of a situation, preferably in your role as a governor, in which you have used each of these four styles of behaviour. Make a few notes about each incident and the circumstances and personalities, which caused you to behave in the way that you did.

For the examples of aggressive and non-assertive behaviour, think about what stopped you from being more assertive. What do you think you might have done differently, in the light of the suggestions above? You might find it useful to draw up a sheet along the lines of the example below to work through this activity.

Style of behaviour	Example	What stopped you from being assertive?	What could you have done differently?
Passive	I just let my fellow governors defer the item on self-assessment AGAIN when I knew it was important and I should have insisted	Fellow governors can be intensely irritated by this topic - concern that I will make the situation worse and fear about the impact their responses will have on me	Maybe acknowledge their anxiety and my own. Consider the situation from their perspective to open up a new choice of responses

Viewpoint

This kind of analysis may help you see more clearly what was happening in a difficult situation or relationship that you or a colleague had to face. A mismatch in styles of behaviour is not always the problem, and often not the only problem. However, being aware of your own style and other people's means that you are better able to analyse what is going wrong in communication between individuals, and to make choices about how to respond.

Our behaviour towards each other is affected by factors such as personality, position in the organisation, power, perception, mood and history. We cannot expect to behave in the same way all the time because the chemistry involved in interacting with other people is unique to each event and incident. However, developing an awareness of ourselves, and how we respond to others is a key dimension of our professional development as governors. By developing assertive behaviour, we are more likely to have our own needs met and to be meeting the other person's needs at the same time. This in turn increases our self-confidence and improves our working relationships with others.

Further reading for Section 1

Dealing with Difficult People Versus Them Dealing with You!

Dr Bill Crawford, psychologist, on a new approach to dealing with difficult people - [video clip](#).

Ladder of Inference

The Ladder of Inference is one of the most effective tools in understanding and explaining why we so often get into conflict and fail to get resolution. The Ladder of Inference was originally articulated by Chris Argyris and popularised in Peter Senge's book. The Fifth Discipline, the art and practice of the learning organisation. ISBN: 0-7126-9885-X

Perceptual positions ... in more depth

TED talks: **[William Ury: The walk from "no" to "yes"](#)** - William Ury, author of Getting to Yes, offers a way to create agreement in even the most difficult situations.

Article by Catherine Sandler in Strategic HR Review, January 2012: **[The Emotional Profiles Triangle: Working with Leaders Under Pressure](#)**.

Section 2

Communications

This section looks at key aspects of communication: how individuals interpret the same experience differently, factors that get in the way of clear communication ie barriers to communication, and the value of giving and getting feedback so as to develop a shared understanding and common purpose.

Communication strategies

We often hear of difficulties in organisations defined as ‘communication problems’. It seems to be a catch-all for all the ills, mistakes and misunderstandings that characterise organisational life. The essence of survival in any organisation is to be able to communicate effectively. For a governor with a specific role to play it is essential.

Communication strategies, systems and practices do play a central role in high performance, influencing the energy levels for change and improvement. Effective communication requires effective strategy - a coherent plan of action. The activities and further reading in this section should enable you to identify common barriers to communication and discuss strategies to help.

Improving communication means giving attention to the words you use, how you use them and your ability to listen. An important aspect of a governor’s interactions with other people is presenting your case, your views and the collective views of governors to others.

How we interpret the world

The process through which communication is structured is often fraught. How many times have you witnessed an event, say a film or TV programme, or a conversation at a social or business event, and then heard someone else’s account of it conflict with your own? We tend to expect everyone to see things the way we do, so it is a bit of a shock when they have a totally different view. If people disagree in their understanding and interpretation of shared experiences, how much more difficult is it to get across ideas and opinions about something that is outside the other person’s experience altogether?

Factors that get in the way of effective communication

No matter how good the communication system in an organisation is, unfortunately barriers can and do often occur, and may include, the following:

Language

The communication message might not use vocabulary that is understood by the receiver, for example, too much use of technical or financial jargon.

Noise

Various things stop a message from getting through or being heard, e.g. poor connection, background noise, distractions, too many people speaking.

Overload

Too much information can cause problems, for example overload can slow down decision-making.

Emotion

The relationship between the sender and receiver of communication might adversely affect the message – which could be ignored or misinterpreted.

Gaps

Too many intermediaries, e.g. too many layers in hierarchy through which the message has to be passed, might prevent or distort the message.

Inconsistency

If people receive conflicting or inconsistent messages, then they may ignore or block them.

It is essential to put in place strategies to deal with the barriers you identify. By overcoming barriers to communication, you can ensure that the statement you are making, individually or collectively, is not just heard, but also understood, by the person or people you are speaking to or /communicating with.

Giving and getting feedback

Because of the difficulties already considered, seeking feedback from the receiver of communication is crucial to make sure the sender has succeeded in conveying what they wanted to convey. This checking helps to ensure mutual understanding:

“Does that make sense?”

“What do you think about that?”

“Tell me what you think I said. I’m not sure if I was being very clear.”

It is useful to get in the habit of giving feedback as well as asking for it, by paraphrasing or reflecting back what the sender has said or asking for clarification if the meaning is not clear.

“Let me just check. You want to...”

“What do you mean when you say...?”

“Can I just clarify...?”

Another important form of feedback is non-verbal communication. Non-verbal signals often convey our feelings. We sometimes say one thing while feeling quite the opposite. Facial expressions, posture, vocal intonation and inflection often ‘leak’ what we are really feeling.

Activity

Giving and getting feedback

Work through the questions below to identify areas where more feedback would help you in your work.

1. How often do you ask for feedback from your colleagues on the governing body?
☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
2. How often do you consciously give feedback to your colleagues?
☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
3. Identify one person whom you would particularly like to ask for feedback, and note down when and how you will do it.
4. Note down one person to whom you think it would be useful to give feedback, and work out when and how you will do it.

Viewpoint

This activity may have reassured you that you do give and get satisfactory feedback from most colleagues, but it might have made you aware of certain working relationships that could significantly benefit from better feedback. If you think this may be difficult, start by giving and asking for feedback on small issues or in ‘safe’ situations. See what the results are, and build from there.

Appreciative feedback is also worth considering, where we might look for opportunities to celebrate and highlight, for example, achievement, persistence, ingenuity, creativity, character, service, high standards, and positive behaviours overall. It respects unique contributions and outstanding endeavours. ‘Systematic appreciative feedback’ focuses on envisioning people at their very best.

“Appreciative governance offers a set of principles that help intentionally design structures and processes to capitalise on individual and collective strengths, as well as maximize the capacity of the whole”.

Reference: Introducing Appreciative Governance International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry, November 2011

Consider different types of giving and receiving feedback. How does each approach help or hinder effective communications?

Defensive routines

Defensiveness is one of the major barriers to effective communication because when we are being defensive we are often too preoccupied to hear what the sender is trying to convey to us.

Management theorist **Chris Argyris** argues that all exchanges in organisations are designed to avoid threat and embarrassment. We want to act in ways in which we are in control and so we build up what he calls ‘defensive routines’ which ensure the preservation of our control. Sometimes seeking feedback in the way suggested can activate one of those routines, such as denial. Even so, seeking feedback does shift the balance in the interaction.

Carl Rogers suggests that most responses to attempts at communication fall into one of 10 five categories:

- 1 **evaluative** in which the listener, in effect, tells the sender what to do;
- 2 **interpretive** where the listener implies what the sender should think;
- 3 **supportive** in which the listener seeks to reassure the sender;
- 4 **probing** where the listener wants the sender to elaborate further; or
- 5 **understanding** where the sender seeks to confirm that the listener has heard accurately.

Activity

Analysing how your governing body communicates

During the next meeting of your governing body, observe the effectiveness of the communication:

- How much giving or seeking feedback is there?
- To what extent do people talk across each other?
- Which of the five categories do most responses fall into?
- Who tends to make evaluative or interpretive responses?
- Is there congruence between the content of what people are saying and the non- verbal signals they are giving?
- When there is mutual understanding, what do you notice about the quality of the exchanges?
- What concrete examples of appreciative governance are you observing?

Viewpoint

Standing back to observe our own and other people's interactions can be very illuminating. Sometimes this awareness can help us to work out why communication with someone else is difficult, or why it seems to be going wrong, and find ways of putting it right. If you have found it useful to work through this section and observe the interactions of your governing body, you may consider further training or development in this area, either individually or as a group. Communicating is an essential skill for governors and the best way to develop good communication is by practising with other people.

Carl Rogers suggests, "We can achieve real communication and avoid an evaluative tendency when we listen with understanding. This means seeing the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, sensing how it feels to the person, achieving his or her frame of reference about the subject being discussed."

Reference: **Barriers and Gateways to Communication**, Carl R Rogers and F J Roethlisberger
Harvard Business Review

Dialogue - points for reflection

Most of us have a rosy view of ourselves as communicators. Rambling, not listening, talking over people, these are things other people do. But what about you? What are you like to talk to? Have you ever asked anyone? What would they say? And what would you do if the response was negative? Consider the following in the context of your role as a governor.

Definitions of dialogue

From **David Bohm** *On dialogue*, 1996 Routledge

“The object of a dialogue is not to analyse things, or to win an argument, or to exchange opinions. Rather, it is to suspend your opinions and to look at the opinions – to listen to everybody’s opinions, to suspend them, and to see what all that means....”

From William Isaacs ***Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, 1999**

“Dialogue is a conversation in which people think together in relationship. Thinking together implies that you no longer take your own position as final. You relax your grip on certainty and listen to possibilities that result simply from being in relationship with others – possibilities that might not otherwise have occurred.”

From Patricia Romney ***The Art of Dialogue***

“Dialogue is focused conversation, engaged in intentionally with the goal of increasing understanding, addressing problems, and questioning thoughts and actions. It engages the heart as well as the mind. It is different from ordinary, everyday conversation in that dialogue has a focus and a purpose.... Dialogue, unlike debate or even discussion, is as interested in the relationship(s) between the participants as it is in the topic or theme being explored. Ultimately, real dialogue presupposes an openness to modify deeply held convictions.”

From Peter Senge

“The discipline of team learning starts with ‘dialogue’, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine ‘thinking together’. To the Greeks ‘dia-logos’ meant a free-flowing of meaning through a group, allowing the group to discover insights not attainable individually.... [It] also involves learning how to recognise the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning”.

The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership, 2007, chapter 1 page 9 (online sample)

Recognising and honouring the conversational rights of others and yourself

“We have certain conversational rights... to take one example — we have the right to withdraw from a conversation if we think the other person is behaving too aggressively.”

“Understanding your rights, and those of other people, and choosing when to apply them, is an important aspect of being an effective conversation manager.”

Reference: ***The Art and Science of Dialogics***

Preparing for important conversations

“If a conversation is particularly important or complex, it’s often useful to consciously prepare for it. First of all, know why you’re having the conversation, what your purpose is. Second, get your story, message, point of view or case clear in your own mind. Third, think of the impact your conversation might have on both yourself and your conversational partner and determine how you might need to prepare yourself for the conversation and what you might need to do to help the other person hear what you have to say.”

Reference: [The Art and Science of Dialogics](#)

Finally, it is worth stressing that many exchanges between people are in reality not aiming to progress towards mutual understanding. Instead they often represent struggles for power and control of one person over another. Reading the politics of the governing body and its meetings is a crucial dimension of being an effective governor. It is one we shall turn to in Section 3.

Further reading for Section 2

[Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication](#)

Harvard University Press, 1999

[Why communication skills are so important](#)

Useful summary of the communication process and removing barriers to communication

[How good are your communication skills?](#)

Self-assessment of your own communication skills

[The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership](#), 2nd Edition, 2007 Jossey-Bass Publishers, Michael Fullan (Introduction) ISBN: 978-0-7879-8400-7. Helpful critical insights from respected authors, education researchers, and practitioners including Peter Senge - See chapter 1.

Dialogue: The Art Of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and in Life, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, first edition 1 May 1999

Dialogic Leadership, William N. Isaacs Pegasus Communications in The Systems Thinker Volume 10 Number. Pegasus Communications, 1 February 1999 reference: The Concept of Dialogue page 2

On dialogue, David Bohm, Editor Lee Nichol, Edition 2 revised, reprint, Routledge Classics, 2004 ISBN: 0415336414, 9780415336413

Introducing Appreciative Governance, International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry, November 2011, Volume 13 Number 4. Guest Editors: Sallie Lee, Bernard J. Mohr and Cheri Torres. ISBN: 978-1-907549-07-6

Association of Colleges (AoC), College reputation and communications functions:

- [AoC / ICM familiarity of public with Colleges 2011 toolkit](#)
- [AoC Communication Practitioners Survey Series 07 - 10](#)
- [AoC/CIPR survey into College communications roles and tasks](#)
- [Media trends and social media use in Colleges - Chris Rushton and Philip Young](#)

The most recent publications produced by the [Sixth Form Colleges Association Forum](#) can be found via this link, which includes the [Sixth Form College gateway to LSIS Governance Training Materials 2012.](#)

Section 3

Power, influence and politics

According to various theories on management and organisations, we are ‘sense-makers’. That is to say, we are engaged in reading and ascribing motives to the behaviour of others. Being able to process this information and predict the actions and reactions of others can make us more effective in managing the complexities that confront us in organisations.

People actively pursue their personal goals and governors are no exception to this. Individuals perceive and interpret their environment, and subsequently adapt and make choices in line with what they believe is realistic in that context or environment. In these ways people formulate strategies that are designed to fulfil their goals.

However, the way in which we interpret our environment is shaped by our own experience and values – each individual has his or her own ‘world view’ through which they interpret their perceptions of the environment.

To support each other, governors generally find it helpful to have some awareness of the different interests and world views of their colleague governors. Getting progress and understanding on a particular issue will happen more quickly if you are able to start where other people are, and move them towards a shared sense of purpose.

How clear is your understanding of how to embody the values that are consistent with your organisation, the sector as a whole and your own personal values and beliefs, enabling you to contribute towards building a positive and encouraging atmosphere and sense of common purpose? Inevitably the ‘transformational changes’ facing the sector, highlighted for example in the LSIS report **The Further Education and Skills Sector in 2020: A Social Productivity Approach**, May 2011, and the Hay Group research Leadership 2030, **Building the new leader - Leadership challenges of the future revealed**, place even more emphasis on the importance of understanding organisational dynamics and having clear strategies for the development of a common sense of purpose.

Activity

Translating between different views of the world

Read the following thumbnail descriptions of four governors, and then answer the questions below.

Nelson Smith works for a local voluntary organisation that works with young black people. He knows a lot of people in the local African-Caribbean community and works with a range of other voluntary organisations. He wants to make sure the college is meeting the needs of young black people. He is used to informal meetings where ideas are discussed and decisions worked out by consensus, and finds the governing body very bureaucratic. He is not perturbed by confrontation or conflict, and thinks it is useful to air differences and grievances.

Pauline Michaels is a retired GP who believes passionately in education. She has spent her professional life diagnosing and treating patients – this involves gathering and analysing information within a short consultation, making rapid decisions and getting things done promptly. She is always willing to undertake practical tasks but she is not a strategic thinker. She finds governing body meetings tedious and says very little. She believes the Chair and principal should generally be left to get on with things.

Richard Bryce is a partner in a local firm of solicitors. One of his children attends the college. His professional life involves carefully timed meetings with clients and issuing precise instructions and / or delegating tasks to other colleagues. He is a clear thinker and good speaker, quickly cutting to the core of an issue or problem. He feels the governing body should be more businesslike, and dislikes long rambling meetings where other people say a lot that is not relevant to the issue.

Michaela Jessop is a staff governor. She is a strategic thinker, and quick to analyse the political implications of the issues and decisions that the governing body deals with. She is a good advocate for the staff viewpoint, sometimes outspoken on questions of principle, and has a healthy suspicion of management.

Choose three or four individuals on your own governing body whose viewpoints you sometimes find hard to understand.

1. Can you pinpoint things in the selected individuals' background or experience that would help to explain their world view, and their likely response to particular issues? You may find it useful to write thumbnail descriptions like the ones above (making sure to keep them confidential and anonymised).
2. Consider how you might translate a particular issue or problem into terms that would make it easier for each of the individuals selected to make sense of it.

Activity

Reviewing your strategies to work with other governors

Think about a time when you had difficulty persuading members of the governing body to consider an issue or take a particular course of action, e.g. seeking a decision on when and how the writing of the self-assessment report should take place.

1. Use the first column of tick boxes in the checklist below to analyse what strategies you used (mark with a ✓) and what alternative strategies you might have used (note with a ?).
2. Use the second column of tick boxes to identify the strategies that you use most frequently. Score 1 to 3 where 1 = means I use this a lot and 3 = means I use this very little.

Score (1 high, 3 low)

	Strategies used	Frequency of use	
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Threaten: If you don't do this, then... We must do this or...
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Direct: You must / have got to / should ...
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moralise: I think the best thing to do is...
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advise: If I were you I should...
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cajole: You must do this, so that...
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sell: You have always said that this has been an area of difficulty for you. I believe that this initiative will overcome those problems.
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Motivate: If we get this done, it will be great because we are then able to...
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Summarise accurately: The key points to bear in mind for this decision are...
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use logic: The correct thing to do is... The rules say...
10. try	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Question to collect information: What do you want to and achieve?
11.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Suggest options: The options are either... or...
12.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Involve: What do you think about...?
13.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Include: I think you are absolutely right. We need to take that into account.
14.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support: Clearly if you see it that way then we must respect your judgement and consider the implications.
15.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seek common ground: Are there some things here that we can agree on right away?
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage: That was a good point you made a few minutes ago, can you say more?

Viewpoint

1. There is obviously no blueprint here. Your own reading of the situation is important. You need to consider how crucial it is to achieve all governors' ownership of the decision and what time is available to make that decision. Obviously getting real consensus on a decision from a group of people will take longer than simply getting formal agreement. However if governors are just instructed to agree to something, their actual commitment to the decision may be severely limited. There is a tension in any decision making between getting through the business efficiently and allowing enough time for information, discussion and persuasion in order to achieve a high degree of commitment. This tension will influence your approach and the strategies you use.
2. Broadly, strategies 1 to 7 in the checklist above represent more or less subtle 'controlling' strategies, i.e. directing other people to do what you want. Strategies 8 to 11 are 'rational' strategies, i.e. applying reason or using information to assist decisions. Strategies 12 to 16 are participative – encouraging other people to contribute and feel involved in decisions. Each of the strategies listed is useful at the appropriate time and place. However, if you tend to use one type of strategy more than any other, and if you find you use participative strategies less frequently than others or only very rarely, you may want to think about expanding your negotiating style by trying out some of the strategies that you only occasionally use now.

Being an effective governor can often require a significant amount of tact, diplomacy and patience. These are key characteristics of the role. However, they should be based on an overriding sense of purpose, direction and focus. Being able to read the intentions, preferences and orientations of others can have a profound impact on your effectiveness.

The CIPD identify an organisation's shared sense of purpose as "its identity and 'the golden thread' to which its strategy should be aligned".

What deeds, actions and behaviours do you observe that demonstrate a common sense of purpose for governors in your organisation? What opportunities do you have to foster debate and ambition to support the sector and your organisation in envisioning and determining its own future?

Further reading for Section 3

Make your values mean something, Lencioni, Patrick, M., July 2002. Harvard Business Review, Vol 80, Issue 7, pp. 113—17 — article explaining the different types of corporate values and how to make them 'stick'.

CIPD members resource: Shared purpose and sustainable organisation performance, October 2009

Power: Why Some People Have It – and Others Don't, Jeffrey Pfeffer, 2010

The Further Education and Skills Sector in 2020: A Social Productivity Approach, May 2011
LSIS-commissioned report from the RSA's 2020 Public Service Hub, providing an independent perspective for the further education and skills sector on possible futures.

The report is designed to foster debate and ambition to support the sector in envisioning and determining its own future.

Building the new leader - Leadership challenges of the future revealed.

Hay Group Leadership 2030 research. Governors may choose, for example, to consider the six 'megatrends' identified to promote further dialogue with others, in order to inform future thinking.

Section 4

Working with groups and teams

Another key aspect of sense-making (see Section 3) is reading group and team dynamics. Despite the fact that we are all group and / or team participants in one form or another, it is rare for us to stop and think why people behave in a particular way. It is only when a problem arises that we are alerted to the fact that something might be wrong.

Content and process

Governing bodies are a group or team of people who meet to make decisions. In order to do that they consider information and ideas that are set before them. We can refer to the information, ideas and problems they consider as content issues. However, what many of us miss when considering the performance of a group or team are the process issues: in other words how the group or team is addressing the content issues. Process is the oiling of the content wheels. Process ensures that content does not become stalled or seized on the way. We ignore process at our peril. Process is about:

- how communication is handled;
- who is talking to whom; and
- the methods by which the governing body reaches a decision, e.g. consensus- seeking, polling, or unanimity.

Activity

Making use of process behaviours

Some behaviours can help process and others can help content. Examples are given in the table below. At the next meeting of the governing body, assess how many process behaviours you see.

Behaviour that contributes to content	Behaviour that contributes to process
Summarising	Humour
Clarifying	Compromise
Giving information	Encouragement
Asking for information	Asking questions
	Asking for feedback

Viewpoint

If process behaviours are few and far between it is likely that the governing body may not be performing very effectively as a group. If governors are aware of their preferred behaviours and there is a good balance between process and content people, this can be a strength. An imbalance or lack of awareness of these different behaviours amongst key players can end up pulling meetings in opposite directions. A focus on group process skills is one area of training that can make a real difference to the governing body as a whole, and you might want to consider this with colleague governors, the clerk, the Chair and the principal.

Disturbances

Other factors that can impede the progress of a group or team include:

- emotional issues – e.g. personal conflict between members;
- identity – e.g. a younger possibly less experienced member feels apprehensive or intimidated by other members;
- power – e.g. a governor whose autocratic behaviour discourages debate; and
- alienation – e.g. a new member has not had a satisfactory induction and is not sure whether others accept her as legitimate contributor.

Group norms

All groups and teams establish norms of behaviour, i.e. codes of acceptable conduct through which the group and team works. The key issue here is whether the norms help the group or team to be effective, or work against it.

There are a number of stages any group or team must go through in order to establish effective working relationships; **Bruce W. Tuckman** refers to these stages as ‘forming’ ‘storming’, ‘norming’ and ‘performing’.

During this process, individuals test out each other’s commitment, goals, priorities, etc. Only after that can norms be established and the group move towards performing effectively in a cohesive way. Regular changes in group or team membership tend to inhibit this process.

Activity

Observing group and team interactions

Read the more detailed information about the work of Bruce W. Tuckman (see further reading). Can you identify the group / team norms of your governing body? Is the current group of governors at the forming, storming, norming or performing stage? Are you able to spot emotional behaviours that are restricting its performance? Are you able to glean any information outside meetings to confirm or refute your analysis?

Viewpoint

How a governing body functions will affect the quality of the decisions it makes and the sense of commitment that individuals bring to its deliberations.

Research studies on teamwork have some value here. Evidence suggests that effective teams:

- are open with each other and do not shy away from confrontation;
- encourage both co-operation and conflict; and
- regularly review their performance, e.g. through self-assessment or a governance health check.

Groupthink

One of the dangers that can ensnare groups is ‘groupthink.’ This is where a group or team of people avoid conflict by seeking to find a way of agreeing above all else. This consensus-seeking becomes an end in itself. No-one wants to disrupt the cosy atmosphere by expressing a view that might destabilise it. There is an illusion of unanimity because views are not contested or disputed despite the fact that, deep down, individuals may have reservations about them.

This danger has afflicted certain further education governing bodies in the past, leading to some high profile cases where weaknesses, including a tendency to groupthink, have been publicly exposed.

Defining creativity in leadership and governance

“One of the essential ingredients of high performing individuals, teams and organisations is creativity (Basadur, 2004). To be creative means releasing talent and imagination, the ability to take risks and, in some cases, necessitates standing outside the usual frames of reference (Harris, 2009). Creative people push the boundaries: they seek new ways of seeing, interpreting, understanding and questioning (Hoyle and Wallace 2005). They thrive in circumstances which others might see as chaotic and disorderly (Montuori and Purser, 1999).”

Creative Governance in Further Education: the art of the possible?, Denis Gleeson, Ian Abbott and Ron Hill, University of Warwick, LSIS, 2009 (page 8)

Consider these perspectives in the light of your own role as a governor.

Activity

Reviewing your group / team skills Use the checklist below to do an audit of your group / team-work skills.

1. Work through each item and give yourself a score of 1 to 5.
2. If you can, give a second copy of the checklist to someone you trust and ask them to fill in how they think you score on each item.
3. Compare the scores and, where there are big differences, discuss why your colleague sees you differently.
4. Decide on three or four priority areas for improvement, and how you will tackle them.

Checklist: Skills for working in groups and teams (indicate where you sit on a scale of 1 to 5)

Observational skills

1 = Need to improve and 5 = Good at this

Noting tension in the group	1	2	3	4	5
Noting who talks to whom	1	2	3	4	5
Noting interest level in the group	1	2	3	4	5
Sensing the feelings of individuals	1	2	3	4	5
Noting who is being 'left out'	1	2	3	4	5
Noting reaction to my comments	1	2	3	4	5

Communication skills

Being brief and concise	1	2	3	4	5
Being forceful	1	2	3	4	5
Drawing others out	1	2	3	4	5
Listening alertly	1	2	3	4	5
Thinking before I talk	1	2	3	4	5
Keeping my remarks to the topic	1	2	3	4	5
Problem-solving skills	1	2	3	4	5
Stating problems or goals	1	2	3	4	5
Asking for ideas, opinions	1	2	3	4	5
Giving ideas	1	2	3	4	5

Evaluating ideas critically	1	2	3	4	5
Summarising discussion	1	2	3	4	5
Clarifying issues	1	2	3	4	5
Morale-building skills					
Showing interest	1	2	3	4	5
Working to keep people from being ignored	1	2	3	4	5
Harmonising and helping people reach agreement	1	2	3	4	5
Reducing tension	1	2	3	4	5
Upholding rights of individuals in face of group pressure	1	2	3	4	5
Expressing praise or appreciation	1	2	3	4	5
General					
Understanding why I do what I do	1	2	3	4	5
Encouraging comments on my own behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Accepting help willingly Making up my mind firmly	1	2	3	4	5
Criticising myself	1	2	3	4	5
Waiting patiently	1	2	3	4	5
Going off by myself to read / think	1	2	3	4	5

Viewpoint

This is a practical audit tool which other members of the governing body might also like to use, either privately or as a group. It could provide the basis for useful discussion and insight, and help to identify further training or development needs for particular individuals or the governing body as a whole.

Further reading for Section 4

Smith, M. K. (2005) '**Bruce W. Tuckman** - forming, storming, norming and performing in groups, the encyclopaedia of informal education

Effective Team Building (revised edition), John Adair, 2009 (look under 'All books published')

When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What it Takes to Succeed, Frank M J LaFasto, Dr Carl Larson, Sage Publications, 2001

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, Patrick Lencioni, (2002) explores the fundamental causes of organisational politics and team failure

Leading others to think innovatively together: creative leadership, Basadur, M (2004) – Leadership Quarterly 15(1) 103-21

Creative Leadership: Developing Future Leaders, Harris, A (2009) – Management in Education Vol 23 (1) 9 – 11

Managing Groups and Teams / Groupthink, 2010. Retrieved December 27th 2012, from Wikibooks: **http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Managing_Groups_and_Teams/Groupthink**

The Secrets of Great Teams, Harvard Business Review, April 2012.
The New Science of Building Great Teams by Alex Pentland

Teamwork on the Fly, Amy C **Edmondson**

Coming Through When it Matters. **How** Great Teams do their Best work under pressure, Heidi K Gardner.

Section 5

Managing self

As a governor, you are acting with senior colleagues inside and outside the organisation to contribute towards the effective working of the governing body. The relationships between members of the governing body and the senior staff are often complex and can be much enhanced by the emotional intelligence of both staff and governors.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise your emotions, understand what they are telling you, and realise how your emotions may be affecting people around you. Emotional intelligence also involves your perception of others - when you understand how they feel. This allows you to manage relationships more effectively.

Psychologist **Daniel Goleman** looked at data from large high-performing companies and found that although technical skills and cognitive ability have some importance at senior levels, emotional intelligence characterised the most competent and successful managers.

It is suggested that there are four capabilities within emotional intelligence:

- **self-awareness:** the ability to read and understand your emotions and their impact on others; self-confidence and realistic evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses;
- **self-management:** self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, initiative and a drive to meet an internally set standard of excellence;
- **social awareness:** empathy – the skill of sensing other people's emotions / perspective; organisational awareness; recognising other people's needs; and
- **social skill:** the ability to inspire, influence and develop others; communication skills; conflict management, building bonds and promoting co-operation.

It is not within the scope of these materials to offer personal diagnosis of your competence in each of these areas. However you can begin to consider situations where you might practise and enhance your skills through active reflection and learning from events at governing body meetings, interactions between members and the principal, interactions between the principal and Chair, clerk and so on. Get in the habit of noting and analysing critical incidents (situations where something didn't work well and which present useful opportunities to learn from mistakes).

Activity

Analysing a critical incident

Think back over your interactions with a particular governor or group of governors in the last month or two and choose a critical incident to reflect on. Using the questions below as a guide, describe the incident in terms of emotional intelligence – your own or that of other participants.

What emotions drove your actions?

What could you have done differently?

What worked well?

How do your peers interpret what went on?

What would they have done differently?

Viewpoint

We cannot comment specifically on the incident you chose to analyse, but it is worth stressing that this kind of active reflection almost always repays the time spent on it. It can give valuable new insight into how others see us and how we might handle the situation and the interactions that took place more effectively in future.

Consider keeping a notebook where you regularly analyse critical incidents. If you have a learning group or peer network, you could periodically spend some time describing an incident and jointly reflecting on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skill. Managing yourself, and hence others, is a key component of your self-development.

Analysts are increasingly interested in the idea of ‘learning organisations’ – that is, organisations which actively use mistakes as vehicles for learning about and improving organisational effectiveness (as opposed to laying blame for things that go wrong or seeking to hide them). See, for example, **Peter Senge’s description of learning organisations** as:

“...organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.”

Remember that continuous improvement applies to individuals in just the same way as it can be applied to organisations. We have a responsibility to ourselves to ensure that it happens. Emotional intelligence offers a way to examine dimensions of our behaviour that have not had a great deal of attention in the past yet are crucial for progression.

Further reflection

Peter Drucker in his article for Harvard Business Review, *Managing Oneself*, first published in 1999, reprinted in 2005, asks four questions to cultivate a deep understanding of yourself:

- 1 What are your most valuable strengths?
- 2 Equally important, how do you learn and work with others?
- 3 What are your most deeply held values?
- 4 In what type of work environment can you make the greatest contribution?

The implication, he suggests is clear:

“only when you operate from a combination of your strengths and self-knowledge can you achieve true – and – lasting excellence”.

Consider:

- How can the answers to these questions help to inform your role as an effective governor?
- What actions can you choose to take to build on your current strengths as a governor and strengthen even further your collaborative work with others?

Further reading for Section 5

Harvard Business Review's 10 Must Reads on Managing Yourself: Peter F. Drucker, William Oncken Jr., Donald L. Wass, Stephen R. Covey, Diane L.outu, Tony Schwartz, Catherine McCarthy, Edward M. Hallowell, Stewart D. Friedman, Sumantra Ghoshal, Heike Bruch. Robert E. Quinn, Robert S. Kaplan, Daniel Goldman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee. Harvard Business Press Books, January 2011

Primal leadership: learning to lead with emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman, Ricard E. Boyatzis, Annie McKee, Harvard Business School Press, 2004

The emotionally intelligent workplace: how to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organisations, Cary Cherniss, Daniel Goleman, John Wiley and Sons, 2001

Linking emotional intelligence and performance at work: current research evidence with individuals and groups, Fabio Sala, Vanessa Urch Druskat, Gerald Mount, Routledge, 2006

Leading with Emotional Intelligence: Hands-On Strategies for Building Confident and Collaborative Star Performers, Reldan S. Nadler McGraw-Hill Professional, 2010

Coaching to develop self-awareness: helping people get to know themselves

Peter Drucker Harvard Business Review, **Managing Oneself**, first published in 1999, reprinted in 2005

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 Dr **Travis Bradberry**, Jean Greaves Foreword Patrick M. Lencioni (June 16, 2009)

Module review

This module has looked at working relationships and the skills and strategies that are useful for managing interactions with colleagues on the governing body and staff. If you have worked through the whole module you should now be confident that you can:

- apply assertiveness skills to help manage difficult situations;
- identify common barriers to communication and discuss strategies to help;
- consider the diversity of perspectives and interests represented on the governing body and strategies to help a sense of common purpose;
- explain key processes and skills for working with groups and teams;
- consider skills for self-management and apply these to your own interactions

Summary of key learning points

Individuals use a range of behaviour styles (such as aggressive, manipulative, passive, assertive) in communicating with other people. Assertiveness is clear, honest and open communication. Assertiveness skills are useful in dealing with difficult situations and in communicating effectively with people who deliberately or unconsciously use unhelpful types of behaviour.

Individuals draw on their own background, experience and 'world view' to interpret what they perceive in their environment. The same situation may be interpreted very differently by each of the individuals involved.

Our emotional state can create 'noise' which may distort the communication signals that we send and receive. Our desire to avoid threat or embarrassment can lead to defensive behaviour, which also prevents us communicating effectively.

Giving and asking for feedback helps communication. So does developing an awareness of communication styles, and analysing the way in which individuals on the governing body interact with each other.

Individuals on the governing body are concerned with their own interests and personal goals. You need to understand the interests and motives of colleagues, and be able to translate an issue into terms that make sense to the different individuals concerned.

Using a range of strategies (such as directing, persuading, reasoning, involving) will help you to work with colleague governors in making sound decisions with a high level of commitment. Effective governance requires an awareness of group and team dynamics such as group / team norms, 'groupthink' and disturbances to group and team behaviour. It is valuable to develop process skills for working with groups and teams; this involves observation, feedback and practice.

Emotional intelligence is a characteristic of competent, successful individuals. It comprises: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skill. Reflecting on critical incidents can help to develop some of these capabilities. Using opportunities to learn from things that go wrong is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Where next?

You have now completed work on the Module 4: Working relationships. Revisit the further reading for each section. Note down what further information, support or guidance you would like.

Putting it into action

We hope that working through this module has raised useful questions, increased your awareness of issues and given you ideas for practical action that you would like to follow up. We suggest that you note down any questions or action points that you want to follow up within your own organisation.

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