



Department
for Education

**EDUCATION & TRAINING
FOUNDATION**



ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT INCLUSION

PAPER THREE

Organisational structures to support inclusion

Organisations may find it challenging to attract and retain specialist support staff and develop positive partnerships with Local Authority officials in an Education and Training sector context in which:

- **Salaries for support staff are often relatively low, and opportunities for development limited.**
- **Provision may be dispersed across a wide geographical area, or on different sites, with patchy transport links.**

The following case studies provide examples of ways in which, in very different contexts, organisations have responded to the challenges.

1

Weston College: a GFE in a coastal town

The development of a funded career structure for support staff, based on specialist qualifications

The challenge for the managers in Weston College was to equip support staff with the specialist knowledge to support the increasing number of students with learning needs, in particular those with autistic spectrum conditions.

The strategy adopted by the managers was to introduce a support career structure, with enhanced pay for the support staff, based on their participation in specialist training. Since the managers could not find a suitable local programme in HE, they developed a Foundation Degree in Inclusive Practice with a local university enabling two years of study at the college, with

the option of a third year at the university to gain a BA Honours degree. The degree was originally designed for the college's own staff development, providing a framework to gain expertise and specialist skills in relation to SEND, but has expanded to include professionals working in a number of different roles in the sector.

The benefits have been far greater than originally anticipated: to date over 70 staff have taken the degree with 100% pass rate. There has been an increase in learner retention, achievement and success and the expansion of specialist areas successful in meeting SEND needs across the college. The initiative has provided a highly qualified and motivated workforce with clear opportunities for career progression and advancement.

2

North Yorkshire Local Authority: a mix of dispersed urban and rural provision

Development of a 'hub and spoke' approach to ensuring inclusion across dispersed provision

The challenge for the managers was to ensure that all learners with SEND who live in the county have access to suitable, local, accessible provision.

The strategy adopted by the managers, who recognised the variety and, in some areas, the limited availability of good provision, was to appoint a small team of specialists who were tasked with identifying locations, venues and providers for learners. They agreed

that there had to be flexibility in provision across the county to ensure the needs of learners were best met. They decided to develop a hub and spoke model. The hub consists of a core specialist team based in the central community learning offices, who provide support, observe lessons and monitor quality.

The spoke consists of a range of statutory, private and voluntary providers, who provide a tapestry of provision. This tapestry includes a GFE that provides for almost all of the places for learners in the area, other GFE colleges who provide for one or two learners, and a small specialist garden centre further west, which provides a practical learning environment.

Initial feedback from learners and parents/carers is that the provision is adult focused, challenging and is now ensuring that progress is being made.

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North Yorkshire Local Authority

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3

**Chichester College:
a GFE in a semi-rural area,
with a land-based campus**

Developing specialist progression opportunities for support staff

The challenge for the managers was to provide a progression route for support staff that enabled a depth of specialism across the college, particularly for its land-based provision at the Brinsbury campus.

The managers adopted a strategy to offer career opportunities through the development of specialisms. They believe in developing their staff, and have provided continuing professional development in order to achieve this. The initial two areas of specific focus were autism and dyslexia, the most frequent identified areas of need across the college. More recently the managers have focused on supporting positive mental health across the organisation, and members of staff have received training through the NHS and other external agencies.

As a result of their strategy, many of the learning support staff have become assessors, managers and specialist lecturers, able to foster good practice throughout the organisation. Three learning support staff have become qualified assessors for Disability Support Allowance, enabling them to support students applying to HE.

4

**Wirral Metropolitan College:
a very large GFE in an urban setting**

Ensuring specialist expertise is available across the college for all students with SEND

The challenge for managers was to provide specialist support across a college with a very wide range of learning needs, including low-incidence disabilities.

The strategy adopted by managers was to employ a number of specialist teaching staff with expertise in particular aspects of SEND, including specific learning difficulties; mental ill-health; complex learning difficulties; autistic spectrum conditions; deafness/hard of hearing; visual impairment; physical impairment; moderate learning difficulties. These professionals, in addition to assessing and teaching students, act as a consultation and advisory service for teaching and learning support staff to help them develop their strategies to meet students' needs.

This approach rewards specialist teachers and makes sure the support permeates throughout the college, including those with relatively low-incidence disabilities.

Other structural strategies that members of the Inclusion Circle team have found to be successful:

a. A medium GFE college with four sites:

Managers implemented a strategy in which they introduced enhanced posts, with a senior member of support staff to each of the four sites. Each of these senior support staff had responsibility (and was appropriately trained) in one or more types of specialism. S/he took responsibility for the CPD for LSAs and teaching staff in each site in relation to a specific specialism.

This ensured a consistent approach across the four sites of the college.

b. A very large urban GFE

Managers experienced difficulty in recruiting and retaining specialist support staff in a location with many local schools with sixth forms. In order to retain good staff and inform all teachers and LSAs about best practice, managers introduced twelve new enhanced posts of specialist support mentors, allocated to each of the twelve faculties. The role was to make sure that teachers and LSAs understood the requirements for each student with identified needs, and to monitor individual progress. This action led to improved specialist staff retention rates.

REFLECTION

At this point it might be helpful to consider whether in your specific context it would be advisable and/or feasible to implement arrangements to retain good support staff and find ways to reward them, and consolidate good practice, so that the whole organisation benefits.

How confident are you that your current staffing establishment arrangements foster and disseminate good practice across the organisation?

- ☐ Very confident
- ☐ reasonably confident
- ☐ not very confident
- ☐ not at all confident

What strategies/interventions could you adopt to consolidate and disseminate good specialist practice across the college?

