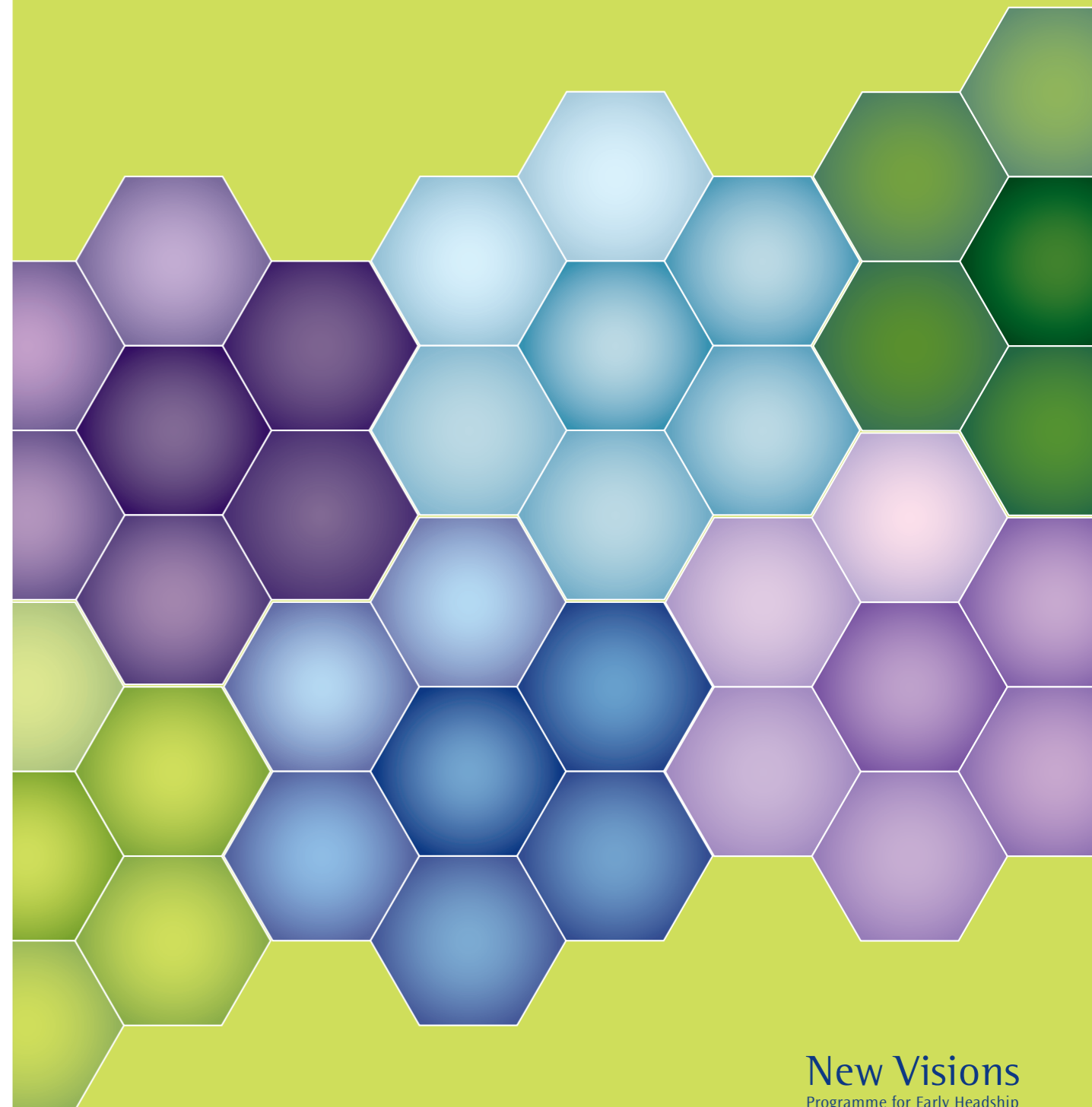


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The Programme Guide



New Visions
Programme for Early Headship

For further information on the New Visions
Programme please contact:

**National College for
School Leadership**
Triumph Road
Nottingham NG8 1DH

T: 0870 001 1155
F: 0115 872 2001
E: ncsl-office@ncsl.org.uk
W: www.ncsl.org.uk

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Introduction and Programme Outline

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) recognises that early headship represents a critical phase in a school leader’s development. We believe that the opportunity for new heads to engage in innovative and collaborative enquiry over an extended period offers a powerful model for learning. The emphasis on knowledge creation, rather than information transfer, will impact on headteachers’ thinking, practice and growth as leaders.

The programme will:

- provide an integrated, systematic and experientially-based strategy at the ‘entry to headship’ stage of school leadership and extend, develop and apply NCSL’s Strategy for Leadership Learning by using the six key areas of leadership learning as the basis for the programme
- offer a programme of themes which emerge from NCSL’s Strategy for Leadership Learning and the National Standards for Headteachers and integrates theoretical perspectives and research-based knowledge with personal knowledge and experience
- enhance the confidence of participants in their early years of headship through access to successful practitioners, peer support, structured reflection and development, and models of best practice
- develop learning methodologies which are based in problem-solving, a collaborative review of experience and the creation of knowledge through school-based enquiry
- provide support through a range of learning relationships, eg consultant heads, facilitators and programme participants online communities
- offer a blended learning experience combining face-to-face interaction and e-learning opportunities including online dialogue with a wide variety of education leaders, as well as using online tools and activities

Outline

The programme is located within the existing Leadership Development Framework (LDF) at the point of ‘entry to headship’. It builds from the needs assessment process carried out during the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) Programme. It will also build upon the substantial evidence base of the Models of Excellence of Effective Headteachers and draw on the National Standards for Headteachers and Ofsted data.

The programme is designed to support new headteachers, to create a context for leadership learning and to build leadership learning habits that will remain lifelong. In doing so the programme will support the standards agenda and offer long-term, sustained improvement models for headteachers and their schools.

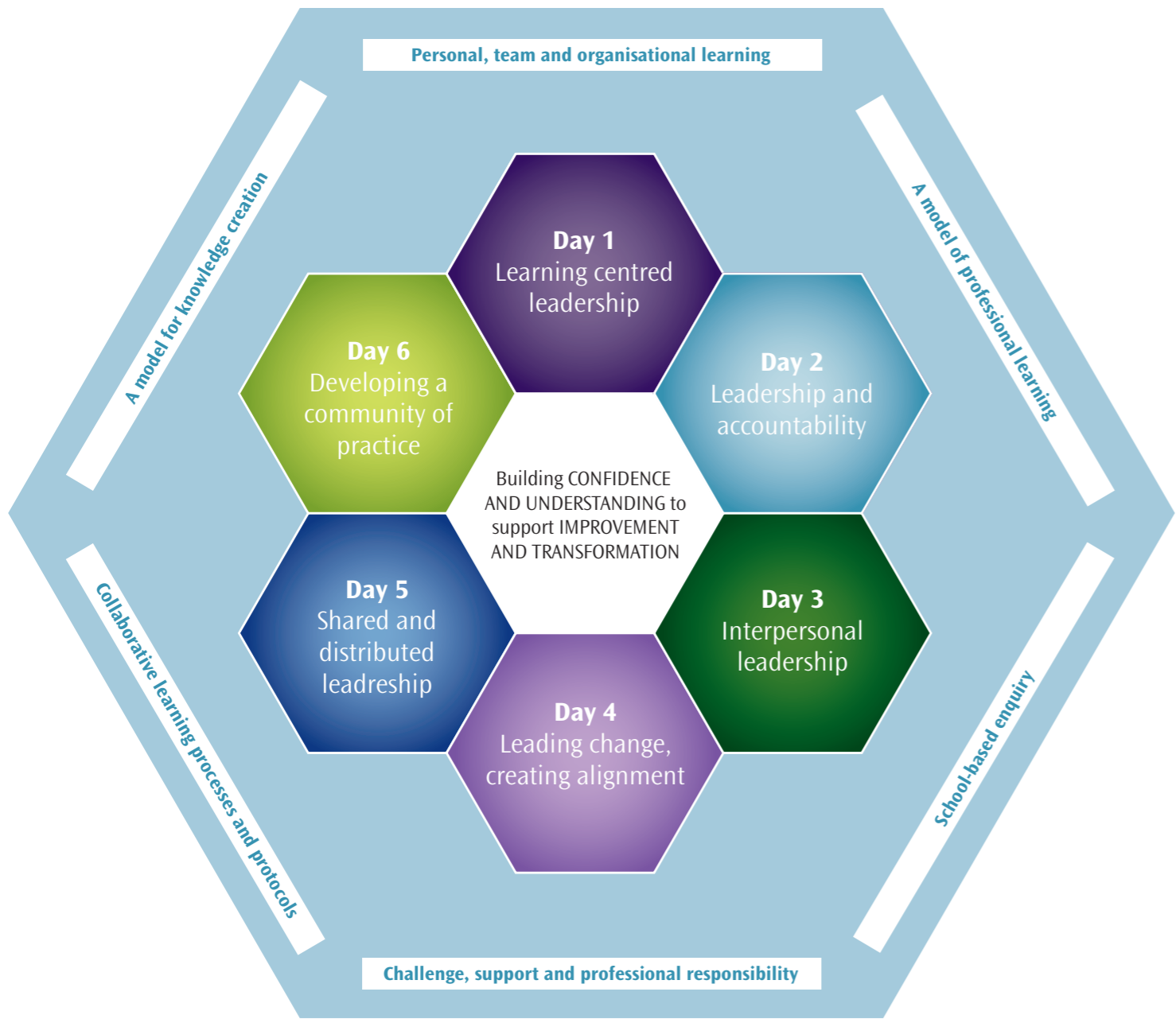
The programme consists of a two-day residential course and 4 further one-day meetings over 10 months. This provides the opportunity for school leaders to learn as members of communities of practice, to connect with the professional knowledge base and to contribute their own unique knowledge about leadership and the context within which they are leading. Each session gives the opportunity to reflect on practice, to problem-solve with others and to plan for the implementation of ideas.

It offers too, a means of engaging with, learning from and contributing to the practice of other new heads.

The programme takes account of prior experience including NPQH. It will offer support and challenge for each new headteacher to learn with and from others and to develop their understanding and skills for application within their schools. The programme will make existing knowledge accessible for heads. The groups will capture and share their own knowledge and they will generate new knowledge together as the programme evolves. Beyond this, groups will be networked so that knowledge can be shared system-wide.

Our aim is to support new school leaders at the start of their career, to connect leaders with one another, to build collaborative learning habits that will be sustained career-long and to foster models of school leadership that will raise student achievement and the morale of educational professionals. NCSL also hopes, through the programme, to establish a career-long relationship with headteachers, who hold such a crucial role in the success of our educational system.

Programme Structure



The Learning and Knowledge Creation Models

The New Visions Programme for Early Headship is based on a model of professional learning which is derived from three fundamental principles:

- recognition and respect of existing knowledge as the basis for creating new knowledge through professional interaction
- the use of theory to inform the analysis of practice and practice to inform theory
- the development of personal understanding which informs enhanced professional practice

Shown below is a learning model which characterises three modes of learning. These are each valid in their own right and are non-sequential. Shallow learning has its place but it is not appropriate for leadership development.

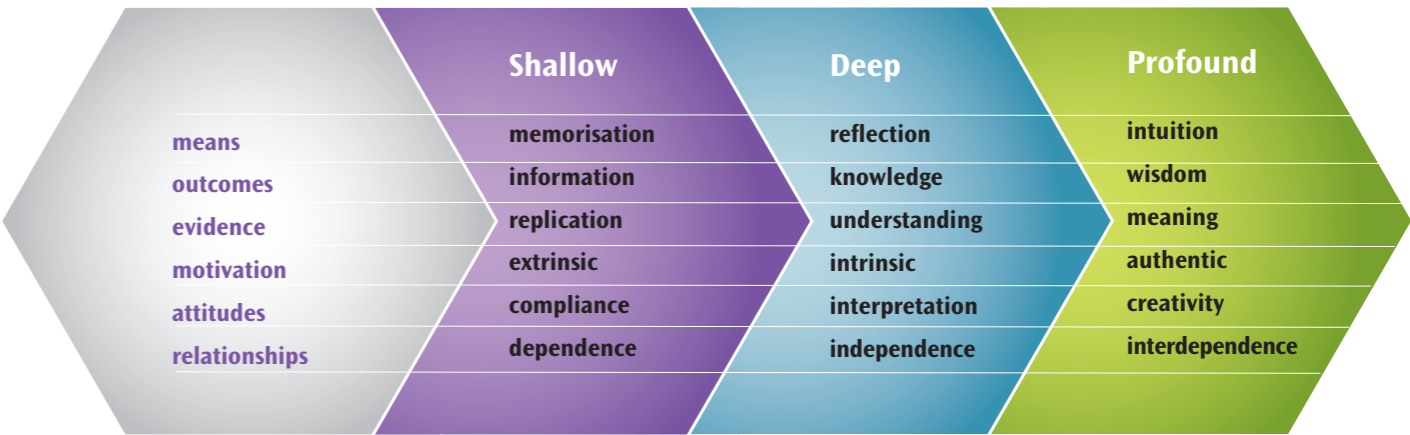
The programme centres on deep learning and on creating the capacity for profound learning. Deep learning is centred on the creation of personal understanding through reflection (individual and shared) which results in the creation of knowledge, which can then be transformed into action.

A key component of the programme's design is the importance attached to knowledge creation.

The model assumes three types of knowledge:

- knowledge which is public, ie theoretical models and other people's understanding
- personal knowledge, the individual's own understanding
- knowledge which is created through the interaction between individuals

The learning activities utilised in the programme are designed to extend and develop each of these components, but place greatest emphasis on the importance of interaction as the basis of creating understanding and so enhancing the development of professional knowledge and leadership effectiveness.



The New Visions Programme's approach can be best understood in the context of this model of learning.

The programme draws from best practice worldwide. It has a clear framework, core content and carefully selected materials. It will utilise commissioned papers, case studies, real situations drawn from the experiences of the group, video stimuli and other learning resources. It is, above all, a framework for learning with an emphasis upon powerful processes responsive to the needs of the group.

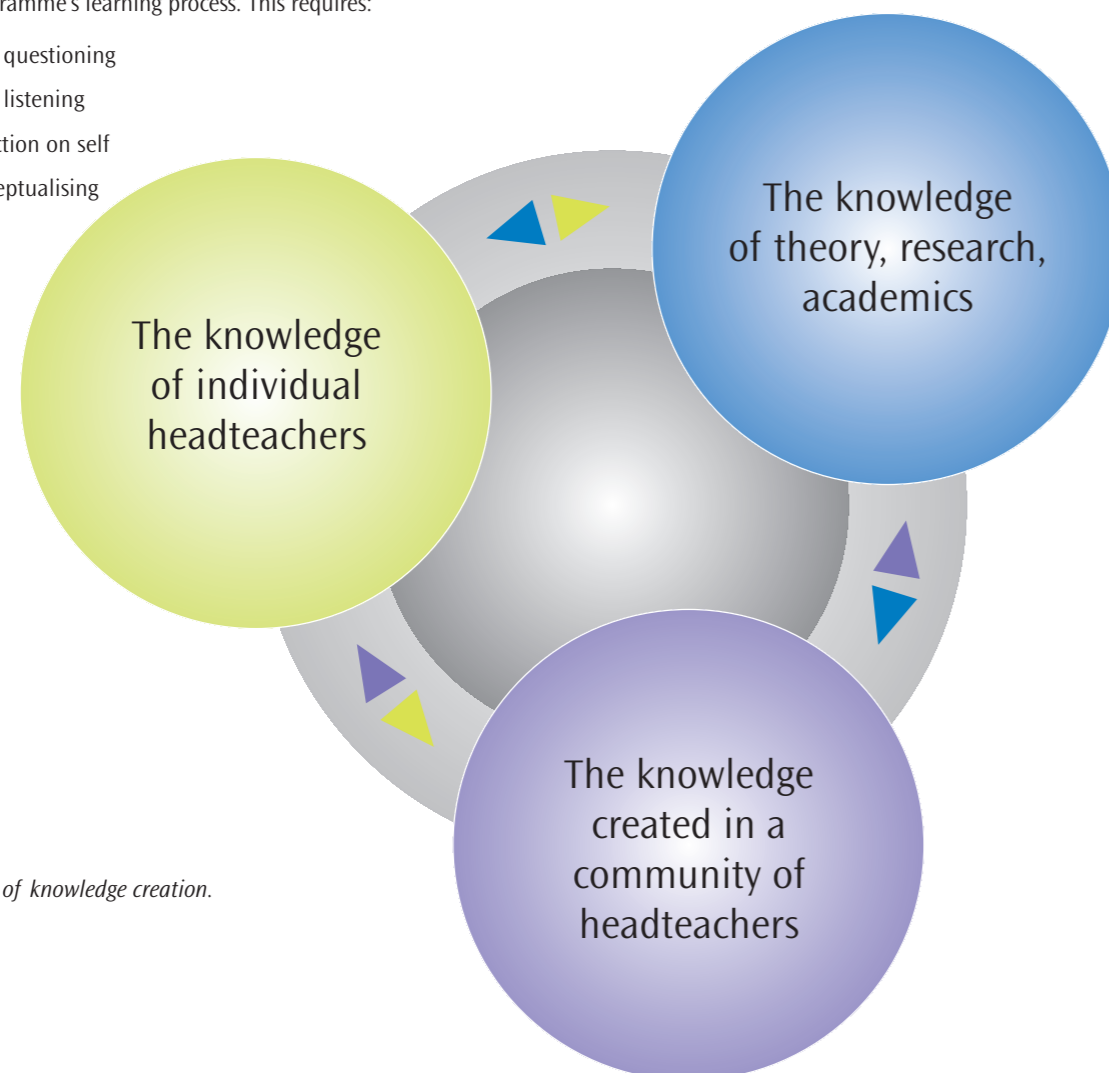
Each theme draws upon a range of learning methodologies – study groups, group problem-solving, peer coaching, case study discussions, action learning sets, intervisitations, school-based enquiry (exchange visits) and collaborative problem-solving strategies and appreciative enquiry.

Reflective and collaborative enquiry lies at the heart of the programme's learning process. This requires:

- deep questioning
- deep listening
- reflection on self
- conceptualising

In addition to the activities specific to each session, each theme contains opportunities in between sessions for activities such as reflective study, school-based enquiry, intervisitations and engagement with others online. In this way the learning will hopefully extend across, between and beyond the 10-month period.

Each theme will address both the contextual realities of the participants and a particular focus emerging from the six areas of leadership learning.



A model of knowledge creation.

Day 1 Learning-centred leadership

This session will present the case for learning-centred leadership as the dominant model for school leadership and headship. It will focus on issues related to performance, raising achievement and the creation of schools as learning communities:

- principles of learning-centred leadership
- analysis of the perceptions of the school from different standpoints
- use of hard data to focus on 'how well is your school doing?'

Day 2 Leadership and accountability

Leadership is about making choices and being accountable for the outcomes of those choices. This session will explore the formal accountability of headship and the moral accountability of leadership:

- exploring what it means to be accountable as a head
- mapping the moral territory of leadership
- exploring moral dilemmas in context and through case studies

Day 3 Interpersonal leadership day

Leadership is only expressed through behaviour – effective relationships are pivotal to securing high performance and a positive climate. This session explores the interpersonal dimensions of leadership, emotional intelligence and understanding the impact of leadership behaviours on others:

- reflecting on self as a learner
- exploring the links between effective relationships, a positive school climate and securing high performance
- analysing the emotional climate of the school

Day 4 Leading change, creating alignment

Every new headteacher is faced with the challenge of leading the school through a period of change, creating a shared culture and alignment on vision, values and purpose. This session explores the relationship between leadership and organisational change, the strategies to secure alignment and leading successful change:

- aligning vision, values and purpose
- exploring models for leading change in schools
- considering the relationship between emotional security and a climate of innovation and change

Day 5 Shared and distributed leadership

Effective leadership is about building collective organisational capacity – ensuring leadership is found in every aspect of the school's work. This session explores the rationale for shared leadership in schools and structures that build collective organisational capacity for school improvement.

- exploring the rationale for shared leadership
- developing organisational capacity for leadership at all levels
- challenging organisational structures and reconfiguring organisational design

Day 6 Developing a community of practice

The previous five themes are all dependent on individual and organisational learning. This session focuses on a review of learning and development strategies in school and integrates the previous themes into a personal strategy.

- consideration of school as a community of practice
- review of personal learning and development of a continuing personal learning strategy
- consolidation, closure and celebration

Glossary of Learning Methods

Action enquiry

A continuous process of learning and reflection that entails a systematic review of our own practice in order to improve and develop. Rooted in real practice and often collaborative in nature, action enquiry is a study of leadership that provokes perspective shifts and promotes new behaviour and action.

Action learning sets

Small groups whose work is based on the belief that there is no learning without action. Through a standard protocol that promotes a problem-solving approach, the set works on leadership development or organisational improvement issues identified by an individual. The protocol emphasises supportive yet challenging questioning, as the set works through shared analysis, problem-framing, problem-solving and knowledge creation. Questioning and critical reflection upon action and experience provide insight that determines future action. Set activity incorporates both the planning and review of the implementation of solutions.

Appreciative enquiry

Is typically a four-stage process that is viewed as being a helpful way of constructing a better future, particularly in times of rapid change and uncertainty. It enables people and organisations to create change by paying attention to what they want more of.

Case study

Usually involves the study of a particular leader, group or institution. By illuminating key themes and issues, case studies generate propositions about development, relationships, practice and its impact. This facilitates comparative review and the identification of alternative and innovative practice.

Coaching and mentoring

Terms often used interchangeably to describe a professional relationship that spans the continuum between challenge and support. The role of the coach/mentor will range from directive target-setting through critical friendship to role-modelling, according to context and need.

Community of practice

A professional network that shares a commitment to action learning and school improvement. It aims to develop its capacity to support learning, promote the development process, and disseminate meaningful outcomes and practical applications.

Diagnostic instruments

Used to stimulate and support reflection and enable the analysis of personal and organisational effectiveness. Examples include 360° Appraisal and the Leadership Style Inventory.

E-learning

The generic term for electronic and virtual developmental strategies. Examples include net-based enquiry, e-learning communities, e-study groups and e-mentoring.

Enquiry skills

Those techniques used by individuals and groups to identify problems, analyse options and establish potential solutions. Supportive skills include listening, questioning, gathering and analysing relevant data, and generating and testing hypotheses.

Intervisitation

A structured and focused programme of visits by members of an established group to schools or other organisations in which there is a clear agenda and a protocol to support investigation, data collection, synthesis and application.

Learning alliances

Formal or informal pairings or triads, created to facilitate professional learning. Mentoring and coaching relationships are examples of learning alliances.

Leadership learning journals

Take the form of learning journals which provide a framework for reflection that enables leaders to trace their unfolding understanding of leadership and share their development with others, and allows leaders to examine the impact their own learning has on the learning of students and the practice of others in school.

Narrative as text

A collaborative approach to learning which draws upon study group protocols, in which the presenter gives a narrative account to the group, who then engage with it as if it were a think-piece without the participation of the presenter. Through the structured framing of the narrative this process acknowledges story-telling as a powerful learning resource, and provides a means through which people can access deeper, hidden layers of meaning and significance.

Peer coaching

Involves a coach who is a colleague with similar expertise or status.

Problem-based learning

Starts with a work-based issue, which is generated by the group or its facilitator. It emphasises a collaborative approach to the development of solutions, using methods that are inter-disciplinary in nature. Proposed solutions are often enacted, as a rehearsal to actual application in the workplace.

Questioning for understanding

A small group learning process which develops questioning skills and learning to extract deep learning from fragments of information. The initiative rests with the questioner whose role is to draw the story out in such a way as to enable the person being questioned to gain better understanding and clearer insight about its meaning and significance. Reflection and feedback form an essential part of the meta-learning element of this process.

Readings

Support each New Visions theme. They will include specially commissioned think-pieces, extracts from books and articles, summaries of research, case studies and resources to support the learning process.

Reflection

The structured critical and analytical review of practice that helps to clarify understanding and inform future action. Reflection is supported by all strategies listed in section two. It is often assisted by the use of a learning journal – a reflective narrative that supports systematic review and planning. Reflection is based upon developing professional-, perceptual- and self-awareness.

Study groups

Use readings as a starting point and stimulus for reflection, analysis and interaction. A study group is a collaborative approach that enables and empowers leaders by raising difficult professional issues and articulating common solutions. Participation in such a group is designed to promote the confidence to engage critically with theory, literature and practice.

Study visits

Characterised by a defined focus, engagement with practice and practitioners, and strategies for implementation. They may have a local, UK or international focus on institutions or systems.

How the Programme Works

Each group is usually comprised of around 15 new headteachers with a facilitator and a consultant head who is an experienced head currently in post. Each group is usually comprised of around 15 new headteachers with a facilitator and a consultant head who is an experienced head currently in post. The role of the facilitator team is to facilitate and support the group's learning through the face-to-face programme and the group's online community.

The facilitator/consultant head teams are supported by the New Visions team at NCSL through development days, provision of programme materials, coaching and mentoring, and occasional visits to the groups.

The facilitator/consultant head teams work in partnership shaping the programme with their groups to enable and support the development of knowledge creation and enabling participation in the co-creation that maintains the New Visions programme as a forward-looking community of practice creating a new educational future.

The programme works through experiential processes, using a wide range of learning methodologies which give recognition to our growing understanding of the variety of ways in which people learn. The operating principle is that, by providing the facilitator teams with experiences of the learning methodologies, exploration of conceptual models, engagement with think-pieces, participation in activities and enquiry, they are enabled to provide their groups of new headteachers with a similar rich mix of learning experiences and methodologies. These experiences then empower new headteachers to adapt and use them with their staff and the staff with their pupils.

Individual and group reflection on the learning experiences and their application in school is therefore an essential and crucial element of the New Visions Programme, as this is seen as a key element in the transfer of learning from the group to school.

The programme therefore operates as a series of mirrors reflecting the core values, beliefs and concepts of the programme using the fractal model of shared leadership explored in Theme three. The programme thus has internal consistency, in terms of walking its own talk as well as national consistency across the groups, whilst simultaneously allowing for some local variation as groups become more involved in the shaping of the programmes for their face-to-face days.

The two-day residential course which begins the programme provides an introduction to the programme, its values and methodologies, and engages the participants in developing their protocols for engagement and their learning agreements.

Expectations and Responsibilities of Participants

The success of the programme, both for individuals and for collaborative learning of the group, depends upon the participant headteachers' commitment to certain responsibilities and acknowledgement that the investment made by them is done so on behalf of the students of their school.

- Participants should have a genuine desire to learn more about themselves as leaders and the work of leading a school. They must have a commitment to working collaboratively with others on this learning.
- All participants will therefore be expected to learn with, learn from, and contribute to the learning of, others in the group.
- The success of each regional group depends on attendance, active participation in the face-to-face sessions, and in the e-learning activities.
- Participants will be expected to draw on their experience of headship and relate that to a wider evidence base through reading, reflection and active learning processes.
- Participants will be expected to engage in school-based enquiry as part of their learning and leadership practice.
- Participants are expected to participate in intervisitations, online discussions and other processes which form an integral part of the programme. This means regular contact and use of talk2learn between face-to-face sessions.
- Participants should commit to working collaboratively with a group of colleagues for the life of the programme, to engage in enquiry, problem-framing and problem-solving, the sharing of knowledge and the development of new understandings. By engaging in this process they will, over time, develop as a community of practice, learning for themselves and on behalf of others.
- Participants are asked to contribute to the evaluation processes that are integral to the programme. This evaluation is a means of ensuring that the programme remains flexible and responsive to participant needs. It also helps maintain the programme's innovative character and is one of the many ways in which participants become co-creators of the New Visions programme.

Benefits

You will:

- establish a professional relationship with NCSL
- have opportunities for mutual support, reflection and analysis of personal leadership practice
- develop an action orientation towards problem-solving and enquiry and a solutions-focused approach to school improvement and managing change
- be in touch with best national and international research and practice and apply this in your school
- develop as an effective learning-centered leader, focusing upon generating powerful pupil learning and achievement and having an impact upon teaching and learning in your school
- further develop the capacity to energise, transform and continuously improve yourself and your school
- receive ongoing support for development by skilled and experienced facilitators and consultant serving headteachers
- learn from and with each other through shared reflection, evaluation and collaborative planning, with opportunities to become part of a wider, online community of practice
- build lasting mutually-supportive professional relationships
- address real issues drawn from the specific context of participants' schools within a framework that provides both challenge and support
- have individual knowledge and expertise valued in an environment where headteachers' experience and the specific context of their work will be used as a platform from which new knowledge and skills can be reconstructed and applied
- participate in active-learning and enquiry through a focus on problem-solving, experimentation, implementation and evaluation, with the aim of enhancing participants analytical, reflective and collaborative skills
- focus explicitly upon the headteacher's role as a leader of teaching and learning to explore their pedagogic understandings and to address the leadership of schools as learning and teaching organisations for students and staff

