A guide to planning and evaluating workforce development

January 2019

Introduction

Workforce development is a key priority for Youth Music, part of our theory of change towards a musically inclusive England. Our assumption is that workforce development is an essential ingredient in improving the quality of experience for children and young people.

This guidance has been designed to help you:

- Consider what type of workforce development activity is most appropriate for your programme.
- Plan how you will evaluate workforce development outcomes.

Background

In autumn 2017 Youth Music engaged Chrysalis Research to undertake some primary research into workforce development activity. This included:

- A review of the existing evidence base relating to professional development activities for practitioners and how they impact children's learning and development.
- 13 telephone interviews with individuals from Fund C grantholder organisations.
- 23 telephone interviews with participants in Fund C professional development activities.

Relevant findings from the original research have been synthesised and summarised into sections one and two of this resource. New material has been added in the final section to help organisations in planning and evaluating their programme.

It is important to note that this resource is not comprehensive. It does not cover all types of workforce development activity, and the analysis is top-level – intended to stimulate thinking rather than provide comprehensive answers.

Contents

1. What makes for effective workforce development?

The researchers analysed interview data and documents using a theoretical framework. This framework was based on the best available evidence about the impact of professional development on children and young people's learning and development[1]. This evidence demonstrates that the design of workforce development programmes is a critical factor in determining their effectiveness. Key learning and evidence is synthesised below, and suggests five essential considerations that should be taken into account when planning for a successful programme:

1. A structure that encourages participants to learn the theory *and* apply it

2. Appropriate length and depth

3. Designed around participants' needs

4. Input from external specialists

5. Peer support

1. A structure that encourages participants to learn the theory *and* apply it

The most impactful programmes have a structure that enables participants to learn the theory and then apply it, incorporating all the following elements:

a. Analysis of and reflection on underpinning rationale, theory, evidence and assessment/progress data. This ensures that the workforce is drawing on the best available evidence about 'what works'.

b. Explicit considerations of and discussions about how the content of professional development can be applied, i.e. translated into practice.

c. Opportunities to experiment with implementing new learning, ideally supported by peers and/or specialists.

2. Appropriate length and depth

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[1] E.g. Cordingley, P., Higgins, S., Greany, T., Buckler, N., Coles-Jordan, D., Crisp, B., Saunders, L. and Coe, R. (2015) *Developing great teaching: lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development*. - Teacher Development Trust, London.; Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H. & Fung, I. (2007) *Teacher professional learning and development. Best evidence synthesis iteration (BES)*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.; Cordingley, P., Bell, M., Isham, C., Evans, D. & Firth, A. (2007) *What do specialists do in CPD programmes for which there is evidence of positive outcomes for pupils and teachers?* – London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.; Cordingley, P., Bell, M., Rundell, B. & Evans, D. (2003) *The impact of collaborative CPD on classroom teaching and learning.* London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

The available evidence suggests that the most effective professional development programmes (particularly where they aim to bring about substantial changes), last significantly longer than one day, and contain multiple instances of ongoing support and follow-up activities. It is possible, however, for short (up to a day) professional and workforce development activities to have a considerable and lasting impact on teaching and learning if they target a narrow area of practice. Short opportunities are also appropriate when the aim is to raise awareness or brief people about opportunities, possibilities or options.

3. Designed around participants' needs

The existing wider research evidence is consistent in its conclusions that the content of workforce and professional development activities should be directly relevant to participants' day-to-day practice to be successful. Equally important is awareness of differences between participants – their starting points and learning styles – and adapting content and activities accordingly.

4. Input from external specialists

The available evidence from the literature emphasises the important role of external specialists in professional development. Where effective, external specialists:

- Help participants believe better outcomes for children and young people are possible.

- Challenge existing practices and orthodoxies.

- Introduce new knowledge and skills to participants.

- Model new practices and techniques.

- Support participants as they implement changes to their practice (e.g. by observing them and providing feedback).

- Make explicit links between professional development activities and their impact on children and young people's learning (for example through analysis of evidence of young people's engagement, learning and progression).

5. Peer support

Collaboration and peer support is considered integral to all effective professional development. Peer support can be effective (particularly for problem-solving) when peers work with children with similar needs and common learning goals have been established. Yet, evidence reviews highlight that collaboration in professional development can be linked to negative as well as positive outcomes. In particular, where collaboration is the only focus, learning can be limited.

2. Potential pitfalls by activity type

The following types of workforce development activity are commonly run by Youth Music-funded organisations. Whilst they all have significant merits, they also have potential pitfalls which could limit their impact. This section has been designed to help you think about the potential pitfalls and consider how you might mitigate against them in programme design.

1. Work-based learning and on-the-job training

Being able to observe good practice and 'learning by doing' is highly valuable. However, such sessions can often lack underpinning rationale or theory, meaning that participants may not understand what they are learning. This could lead to a process of naïve discovery – which could be confusing, or overly long.

It is important to ensure that there are opportunities for participants to understand what they are learning so that they know when to use particular strategies and for what purpose. This could be achieved by more experienced practitioners explaining the rationale behind the approaches they're modelling (e.g. during a debrief session or a coaching /mentoring session, following an observation). Alternatively, the work-based learning can be supplemented by something more theoretical, or by engaging specialist expertise at particular points. This could help participants distil their learning and identify future development needs.

2. Networking and reflection sessions

If these sessions are being used as a form of workforce development, then be aware that unstructured activities may lack depth of learning or (without specialist input) simply reinforce existing practice – particularly if group members are not diverse in their experiences.

If you deliver these activities then you can consider ways in which greater challenge to question existing practice can be introduced. This could be done through engaging specialist expertise at set points, bringing in more diverse experiences into the existing group, or adding a more formalised structure that contains provocation or challenge.

3. Conferences and one-off events

Conferences can be very inspirational, but are unlikely to result in profound changes to practice. Similarly one-day training events may not offer a depth of learning due to the lack of opportunity to practice and reflect on new skills learned.

If you are aiming to change practice through a one-day event then consider how you structure your activities to encourage participants to plan how they will apply their learning when they are back 'on the job'. This could be done in conjunction with a follow-up support offer.

4. Non-accredited programmes

Accredited workforce development programmes encourage delegates to experiment with practice in between sessions, collect evidence, and then come back and reflect on the outcome. If a workforce development programme is not accredited or portfolio-based, then there is no requirement to evidence and reflect in such a way, which could be a missed opportunity.

If you are providing workforce development that is not accredited, then consider the ways in which you will encourage delegates to experiment with practice between sessions, for them to collect evidence and reflect on the results. You can do this by setting homework tasks, and/or building reflection on evidence of changes to practice into your existing processes activities (for example by providing a set structure for music leader reflection diaries or in supervision and appraisal forms to elicit commentary on specific areas of practice).

5. Longer programmes

If your programme contains multiple sessions and is spread over a long period of time, then in addition to the considerations above, think about strategies to encourage retention – for example through access to mentoring or incentivising completion.

3. Planning and evaluating your programme

Below follows some step-by-step guidance to help you in planning and evaluating your workforce development programme.

1. Needs analysis

What are the needs of the people you aim to work with? Some things you could do to ascertain a more detailed understanding of need include:

- Consulting with partner organisations

- Asking potential participants about the nature of support they need

- Carrying out observations of practice to spot gaps and areas for development

- Analysing existing organisational data (e.g. appraisals, observation records, evidence of children and young people's outcomes).

As well as consulting about the type of support participants might need, consider logistical questions about their capacity to participate in activities. Think about what budget might be required to enable participation (if you are working with freelancers, for example, what notice they require so as not to clash with other work, and whether you need to pay them to attend).

2. Segment participants to ensure your programme covers a range of needs

If you are running a significant programme that engages lots of people, then chances are you'll be working with people with a variety of needs. If this is the case then we recommend that you segment participants into different categories to ensure that your activities meet their needs. You could do this according to the stage of their career (emerging or established music leaders), their background (community musicians and those working in formal education), their specific role (music leader or trainer), types of children and young people they are working with (early years, special needs and disabilities, disengaged), self-identified skills needs (music technology) etc.

3. Plan the programme around the level of change you're trying to achieve

Consider what level of change you are trying to effect so that you can design your inputs accordingly. If you want to offer something light-touch that might inspire participants to pursue further opportunities, then a one-day or twilight session may be appropriate to achieve the desired outcome.

If you are trying to make significant changes to practice, then your programme needs to enable participants to acquire new knowledge and skills, know when to apply them, be able to apply them, *and* gather evidence and reflect on impact. In such cases your programme may require a sequence of different inputs (e.g. formal training to learn the theory, peer networking to problem-solve, mentoring or additional support outside of sessions, mechanisms to collect evidence and reflect on practice, identification of future learning goals).

If you don't know what kind of training is out there – or who might deliver it for you – then take a browse through the Youth Music Network, or contact a member of Youth Music's Grants and Learning Team.

4. Make your evaluation proportionate and relevant to what you want to find out

The level of evaluation you build into your plan should be proportionate to the level of engagement of participants and your existing relationship with them. For example, if participants attend a one-day session and you don't have any other relationship with them, then the evaluation may be limited to a few questions about the immediate impact of the activity. If you have core staff or freelancers on a longer-term programme then you may be able to undertake a more extensive analysis that includes interviews and observations (perhaps with a sample of participants depending on the size of the overall cohort).

The questions you ask should be determined by the level of impact you are expecting to have. Some example questions are included in the next section.

In addition to the questions below, think about adding some open-ended questions. These are an opportunity for participants to qualify or expand on their answers, or for you to find out things you have no frame of reference for. Bear in mind, however, that open-ended questions take longer to analyse. So pick the right questions, and consider your capacity when deciding how many to use.

4. Example evaluation questions

1. Short-term programmes

For short-term programmes it is appropriate to ask questions about the immediate or short term impact – for example improvements in knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence.

- *To what extent has taking part in [insert the name of the training or other workforce development opportunity] improved your…*

	Improved a lot	Improved a little	Did not improve (stayed the same)	Got worse	Got much worse
Knowledge about [insert CPD content] /understanding of [insert CPD content]					
Your [insert as applicable] skills					
Your confidence in [insert as applicable]					
Your motivation to [insert as applicable]					

Using a 5-point Likert scale (as in the example above) would be suitable for use with a significant number of people. If you are working with smaller numbers than an interview might be more appropriate, or else capturing data in music leader reflection diaries or other documentation.

2. Medium-term programmes

For programmes that last for more than one day (or if you are evaluating a one-day session with a follow-up survey), in addition to the above questions you can ask more specifically about how participants will apply their skills and knowledge.

- *To what extent have you been able to apply what you have learnt at /during [insert the name of the training or other workforce development opportunity] in your day-to-day practice?*

Most of it / some of it / none of it / other _____

3. Longer-term programmes

Longer-term programmes with multiple sessions give you more opportunities to ask specific questions about how learning has affected practice.

- *How much has taking part in [insert the name of the training or other workforce development opportunity] and applying your learning changed your practice?*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Nether agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Sessions are more young-people centred					
Learning environment is more positive					
Content and activities are more engaging and inspiring					
Young people show greater ownership					
Sessions better support young people's musical progression					
Better feedback to young people					

- *How did the changes you made to your practice as a result of taking part in [insert the name of the training or other workforce development opportunity] affect…*

	Improved a lot	Improved a little	Did not improve (stayed the same)	Got worse	Got much worse
Children and young people's engagement in…					
Children and young people's enjoyment of…					
Children and young people's musical learning and development					
[if relevant, insert other aspects of young people's learning and development]					

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