

7 Dissemination of Reflect

7.1 Two key questions

- What should **REFLECT** be aiming to disseminate?
- Why should **REFLECT** be aiming to disseminate its practice?

What should **REFLECT** be aiming to disseminate?


The main point of **REFLECT** is made explicit in the opening to the Handbook:

REFLECT will enable you to engage in an equal exchange of knowledge, skills, ideas and experience aimed at sustaining innovative partnership practice and embedding creativity and creative learning at the heart of your organisation or your business. Your co-mentoring relationship will be centred around a self-identified focus based on your needs and those of your organisation. Through a series of creative conversations you will engage in a dynamic, collaborative learning process giving you space to think and reflect on your own practice. You will have the opportunity to share your learning with colleagues in your organisation and beyond and to consider what impact that might have on children and young people (The Sage Gateshead, 2007, p.1).

The legacy of **REFLECT** is that it has developed an interactive model of reflective learning between practitioners who wish to extend their horizons by engaging in cross-sector collaborative dialogue. The strength of the co-mentoring process described and examined in this Report lies in the capacity of creative conversation to transform personal and professional practice. It is underpinned by a framework of principles and procedures whose main purpose is to guide but not to impose (see Chapter 3.1 for the **REFLECT** framework). Moreover, the cross-sector aspect of this process has been enriching because it has opened new doors, shifted perspectives and resulted in some unexpected practical outcomes.

Four recurring themes have arisen in **REFLECT** and they could help to inform the planning of regional and national cross-sector workforce development programmes.

- What are the necessary conditions for ensuring an effective co-mentoring relationship?
- What are the necessary conditions for enabling cross-sector co-mentoring conversations to facilitate personal and professional learning?
- What are the necessary conditions for strengthening creative learning through cross-sector co-mentoring?
- What are the necessary conditions for using the process of cross-sector co-mentoring as a vehicle for organisational change?



These questions lie at the heart of **REFLECT** and they need to be central to discussions within the dissemination process. But the searching nature of these questions illustrates that **REFLECT** cannot be replicated as a mechanistic toolkit. It is about engaging in a reflective process, not about transmission. The interactive, interconnected approach to **REFLECT** presents a creative challenge to the way in which **REFLECT** is disseminated.

Why should REFLECT be aiming to disseminate its practice?

As was intimated in Chapter 1.2 of this Report, there are strong reasons why **REFLECT** should have a strategic voice in the current national conversation about raising the quality of workforce development through different forms of mentoring and coaching. One strand that runs through the many discussions about developing leadership, fostering creativity, strengthening creative and cultural skills, promoting work-based learning, and encouraging peer support and networking, is the important contribution that can be made by mentoring and coaching. But most recently the debate has broadened to include cross-sector co-mentoring.

To reiterate, some of the key players in recent discussions about the place of mentoring and coaching in workforce development have included the following policy shapers:

Department of Culture, Media and Sport; Department of Children, Schools and Families; Arts Council England; Creative Partnerships; Museums, Libraries and Archives; Creative and Cultural Skills; Cultural Leadership Programme; National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts; Training and Development Agency; House of Commons Education and Skills Committee; National College for School Leadership; Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education; CapeUK; DEMOS

To give one example of the importance of interconnected dialogue, multi-agency and partnership working between the education and cultural sectors is now central to the government's Children's Plan (December 2007) and to the successful delivery of national initiatives such as Extended Services, new diplomas and the development of any kind of cultural offer for young people. With this in mind, cross-sector professional development is consistently being highlighted as a key part of the development of a skilled and confident children's workforce that can develop programmes with and for children and young people which fully meets their needs.

The strength of these national initiatives is that they cut across traditional silos and encourage cross-fertilisation and shared understanding across sectors. In this rapidly evolving context co-mentoring has a major part to play, but at present it is a comparatively uncharted field. That is one of the main reasons why the work of **REFLECT**, with the support of Creative Partnerships, is of strategic importance. In a sense, **REFLECT** as a pilot programme has only had time and resources to sow a seed but it is one that has enormous potential. Circumstances are now right for Creative Partnerships and The Sage Gateshead to set up a **REFLECT** co-mentoring Lab with a remit to focus on research and development into those key areas connected to cross-sector co-mentoring (see Chapter 8 for Recommendations).

The effectiveness of this developmental work would be dependent in part on:

- the quality of the action research into different models of cross-sector co-mentoring;
- the quality of the cross-sector training process for co-mentors, facilitators and leaders of trainers;
- the strength of the developmental links with strategic national agencies and programmes.

7.2 The challenge of dissemination

7.2.1 Strategic national dissemination


In line with the initiatives discussed above, the principles, procedures, processes and outcomes of **REFLECT** should form part of any national policy discussion regarding cross-sector training and development. The full benefit of **REFLECT** will only be felt if it connects to those strategic professional learning opportunities being offered through other national initiatives. Co-mentoring will then be fully integrated into other programmes of workforce development.

One fruitful area of development (as indicated in Chapter 1.3) would be to explore the potential for building the **REFLECT** co-mentoring model into the National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching. This was developed initially by the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (see CUREE, 2005a) and is currently owned by the Training and Development Agency (TDA). Some adaptation would be necessary in order to incorporate cross-sector co-mentoring into the National Framework, but with the growing emphasis on collaborative work between teachers and creative practitioners, the **REFLECT** framework could sit comfortably alongside the current strands of mentoring, specialist coaching and co-coaching. At the level of principle there is a considerable measure of coherence but meaningful connections would have to be made in order to have a viable framework that included cross-sector co-mentoring.

Already The Sage Gateshead is working closely with Creative Partnerships to explore the most effective ways of disseminating the work of **REFLECT** amongst those national bodies and programmes with an interest in mentoring and coaching in a cross-sector context: for example, the Cultural Leadership Programme; Creative and Cultural Skills (through its Mentoring and Coaching Bank); Museums, Libraries and Archives; Training and Development Agency; CUREE; Ignite.

7.2.2 Strategic developments at The Sage Gateshead

Much of the dissemination of **REFLECT** will be generated by Creative Partnerships and The Sage Gateshead linked to its various partners. It is no coincidence that the **REFLECT** programme grew out of the developmental work of The Sage Gateshead. Reflective practice is in the DNA of the organisation – it informs its team development, its programme development, its language and the whole area of Learning and Participation. The following



examples illustrate the ways in which the principles of **REFLECT** are guiding developments at The Sage Gateshead;

- Human Resources is proposing to use **REFLECT** as its model for the development of co-mentoring across The Sage Gateshead. The aim is to deepen the understanding of different elements within the whole organisation – for example, the Head of Customer Services might have a co-mentoring partnership with the Head of Early Years. This should prove to be a fruitful way of strengthening the idea of a ‘learning organisation’.
- The **REFLECT** model is an integral part of the CPD component of Sing Up, The Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, in which workforce development is managed by The Sage Gateshead. For example, a primary music co-ordinator might be partnered with a singer from an opera company as a co-mentor.
- **REFLECT** co-mentoring is a strand in the workforce development component in the organisation’s bid for the Cultural Entitlement programme, which involves cross-cultural institutions in the North East - for example, cultural institutions and schools.
- Interest has been shown by Creative Partnerships for the **REFLECT** model of co-mentoring to be used by the 10 Cultural Entitlement pilot programmes.
- The principles of **REFLECT** have influenced the Young Music Leaders programme, through peer support and mentoring within the 14 - 19 age group.
- **REFLECT** will be disseminated regionally through the North Tyneside Environment of Learning, which involves partnerships between schools, creative practitioners, Custom House and **REFLECT**.
- The Sage Gateshead and **REFLECT** have a strong link with Gateshead Primary Care Trust and Durham University Centre for Arts in Health, Humanities and Medicine (CAHHM), which fosters partnerships between the health sector, education sector and creative and cultural skills.
- **REFLECT** co-mentoring principles could form part of the training of creative agents on behalf of Creative Partnerships.

7.2.3 Regional dissemination

There has been considerable commitment to the future of **REFLECT** at national and local levels but it has been hard to find similar interest regionally. The reasons for this include the transition that has been taking place throughout Creative Partnerships and it has been challenging for Regional Advisory Group (RAG) members to make clear connections with existing and developing practice in this unsettled context. There has also been significant organisational development taking place in Arts Council England, Creative Partnerships, Museums, Libraries and Archives and Business Link and this has impacted on those who felt that they could commit long term to the further development of **REFLECT**.

Recommendations for stronger involvement and dissemination of **REFLECT** at a regional level have been made by the **REFLECT** Management team:

- Invite RAG members to participate in **REFLECT** as co-mentors
- At the start, identify a key regional 'torchbearer' for the programme, who then becomes the main contact regionally. Invest time in that relationship and encourage them to lead regional conversations, to promote the programme in their own role and to develop regional partnerships to support this thinking.
- Give a clearer political context. If the national profile of CPD had been clear at the start of **REFLECT**, there would have been a joint understanding of what all parties were trying to explore and the promise of the pilot programme.
- The importance of being more proactive about attracting co-mentors from areas and organisations of regional priority.
- Invite RAG members to a practical session exploring reflective practice and encourage them to make their own connections. It would be important to ensure that this is led nationally so that RAG members are given permission to take part.

7.2.4 Menu of opportunities for dissemination

The following action points are central to the dissemination process:

- The **REFLECT** Framework to be printed after having been rewritten to include responses from co-mentors.
- The Framework to be placed on the **REFLECT** website.
- Developing a website that serves as a co-mentor database.
- Setting up a **REFLECT** co-mentoring Lab with a dual focus:
 - The training and development of co-mentors, facilitators and leaders of trainers.
 - Action research into key areas connected to cross-sector co-mentoring.
- Building up a pool of co-mentor trainers from **REFLECT** teachers and creative practitioners.
- Widening the pool of facilitators and leaders (e.g., using teachers and creative practitioners from the Teacher Artist Partnership Programme [TAPP]).
- National and international consultancy, training and development.