

2 Outline of the **REFLECT** Programme

2.1 Background

Although this pilot programme is a timely response to the growing acknowledgment that co-mentoring should take its place alongside mentoring, coaching and co-coaching within cross-sector professional development, the principles underlying **REFLECT** have been firmly embedded in the DNA of the Practitioner Development programme at The Sage Gateshead since its inception in 2001. Both mentoring and reflective practice (see DEMOS, 2005, p.24; The Sage Gateshead, 2006, pp.4 - 5) are at the core of all aspects of their workforce development: for example, for trainees and apprentices on the Community Music Training programme; for the mentors within the Learning and Participation team; and for a pilot Mentoring programme for artists in schools commissioned by Creative Partnerships North and South Tyneside. Their commitment can be demonstrated by a key statement in the Tender to Creative Partnerships:

We have found that access to formal and informal mentoring and co-mentoring enriches professional practice, maintains the high quality of delivery and encourages creative, lateral thinking. Self-assessment, peer-to-peer reflective conversation, shared enquiry and feedback enable practitioners, educators, creative professionals and managers to be more flexible and responsive to change, encourage open communication and the ability to articulate and share practice as well as developing and sustaining innovative partnerships (The Sage Gateshead, 2006, p.5).

With their experience, background and philosophy, The Sage Gateshead were well equipped to lead this national programme in co-mentoring and worked commenced on setting it up in December 2006.

2.2 Aims and objectives

Right from its inception **REFLECT** was seen by Creative Partnerships as an integral part of its evolving national CPD strategy, contributing to strengthening longer-term developmental opportunities in mentoring, coaching and peer learning. Due to its cross-sector orientation **REFLECT** has been seen as a pilot programme which could act as a springboard for further development in many different contexts. Its main aim has been to provide one-to-one structured co-mentoring support for emerging leaders from schools and creative and cultural organisations and businesses to develop more innovative partnership practice and enhance creativity at the heart of their organisations.

Objectives of the co-mentoring programme

- To strengthen and develop innovative and sustainable partnerships between schools and the creative and cultural sector

- To build the capacity of the education sector to work effectively with the creative and cultural sector through inter-organisational learning and reflective practice
- To build the capacity of the creative and cultural sector to work effectively with the education sector through inter-organisational learning and reflective practice
- To give emerging leaders the opportunity to develop innovative partnership practice through the process of one-to-one co-mentoring
- To offer opportunities for collaborative professional development for the co-mentors
- To promote the effectiveness of mentoring in developing co-learning and reflective practice within and across organisations
- To enhance the importance of creativity and innovation at the heart of schools, organisations and businesses (The Sage Gateshead, 2007, p.33)

2.3 Management and delivery framework

REFLECT has been managed and delivered by two full-time Programme Managers located within the Learning and Participation department at The Sage Gateshead and working to the Head of Practitioner Development. Each Programme Manager had a lead role for an area of programme delivery. In practice, the Programme Managers worked together as a team leading, directing and managing the programme. This joint approach was effective because it enabled the Programme Managers to make connections, model reflective practice and take time and space for planning and creative thought. Additional support came from a part-time coordinator.

The development of the programme was supported by advisory groups in each region. These groups included representation from Arts Council England, Creative Partnerships, Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), Regional Development Agencies, Business Link and more. The Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) had a key role in the recruitment, selection and matching process.

A National Advisory Group was also set up to ensure that **REFLECT** would actively contribute to and learn from national policy debates on creativity, education and skills, and workforce development. This group consists of:

Alan Clarke - Deputy Director, Curriculum, Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

Philippa Cordingley - Chief Executive, Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE)

Jeff Cull - Team Leader, Training and Development Agency (TDA)

Rick Hall - Leader, *Ignite*

24 John Holden - Head of Culture, DEMOS

Kirsty Leith - Education and Skills Manager, Creative Industries Division, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Katherine Mathieson - Future Innovators, National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA)

Nicky Morgan - Museum Education Policy Adviser, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)

Frances Morrell - Joint Chief Executive, Arts Inform

Fred Paterson - Senior Research Officer, National College for School Leadership (NCSL)

Victoria Pirie - Executive Director, Partnerships and Strategy, Creative and Cultural Skills (CCS)

Paul Roberts - Director of Strategy, Information and Development Directorate (IDeA)

Becky Swain - Senior Officer, Creative Partnerships

Nicola Turner - Project Manager, Cultural Leadership Programme

2.4 Application, selection and matching process

The tender included regional targets for numbers of co-mentors. These numbers were based on the number of schools in each region. The application process began in December 2006 with a holding exercise – an online facility to collect expressions of interest. Recruitment formally began in February 2007. There was an online application form which included three key questions:

- Why would you like to be a co-mentor?
- How will this programme benefit your practice, work, school, business or organisation?
- Can you give an example of reflective practice in your work?

Respondents to the online application process were selected in the following way:

Stage 1: Eligibility

First, the eligibility of all respondents for the programme was assessed. Applicants were sought who met the following criteria:

Either

- From English state schools and early years settings, whether inside or outside a designated Creative Partnerships area, unless the school receives core Creative Partnerships funding.

Or

- Emerging leaders from any cultural or creative organisation or business. An emerging leader is an individual with at least 2 - 3 years experience within a management or strategic role within respective organisations. Creative Directors from Creative Partnerships areas are not eligible.

Or

- Freelance practitioners who run their own businesses.

In addition to fulfilling one of the above:

- Applicants should be based in England.
- Applicants should have completed the three questions as part of the online application process.
- The organisations applying should have a commitment to the professional development of their own staff.

Stage 2: The application

Next, applications were examined to check that their content fulfilled the following criteria:

- The application should show a reasonable understanding of the concept of reflective/creative practice. Existing experience is not essential.
- The application should show that the co-mentor wishes to learn through enquiry and exploration and is not expecting the programme to deliver a creative project. If an applicant has an idea of a shared task, this should have the potential to contribute to a wider discourse about creativity and learning.
- Co-mentors should be able to cascade their learning and development to colleagues and peers both in their organisation and across the country.
- The applicant should have support from their headteacher or line manager.
- The applicant should show evidence of their thinking about partnerships and the process of shared learning.
- Where an applicant has suggested a specific co-mentoring partner, there should be agreement from the partner and the match should be the best possible in the context of the whole region.
- There should be evidence of enthusiasm and commitment to the process rather than the product.

Stage 3: The national and regional profile

Next, it was necessary to weight all of the above in light of the fact that the programme sought to achieve a balance within the 150 partnerships nationally and across the regional demographic. This included:

- A range of education leaders
- A range of cultural and creative organisations and businesses
- A range of experience of previous reflective work
- A range of experience of previous creative work
- A range of starting points
- A geographic spread

Stage 4: Regional Advisory Group (RAG) assessment

The applications were sorted by region and passed onto RAG members who were asked the following questions:

- Do you have any prior knowledge of the schools or creative professionals who have applied which will help our decision?
- How keen are you that the applicant should be a co-mentor?
(1 - very keen; 2 - quite keen; 3 = neutral; 4 - quite unkeen; 5 - very unkeen)
- Can you suggest a potential co-mentor pairing for each person?

After selection, co-mentors were matched through a collaborative process, between the **REFLECT** team and members of the nine Regional Advisory Groups, at RAG meetings. It was found that the geographical and local knowledge offered by RAG members was invaluable in helping to make suitable matches. But from their experience, the **REFLECT** team has recognised that the structure and content of the application process could have been clearer from the start. Also more attention could have been given to devising a clearer system for collating applications as this is essential for viewing, counting and sharing data easily.

2.5 REFLECT Handbook

The creation of the Handbook (The Sage Gateshead, 2007) was a major element in the initial phase of **REFLECT**. It was considered important to place the programme in the wider context and to provide a coherent structure and framework for the co-mentors. This task became the shared responsibility of the **REFLECT** team with support from Creative Partnerships. In its opening welcome to participants the main purpose of the programme was clearly articulated:

REFLECT will enable you to engage in an equal exchange of knowledge, skills 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 (ibid, p.1).

The Handbook offered guidelines as to how to structure the co-mentor relationship, paying especial attention to:

- structuring and mapping future meetings;
- making a learning agreement;
- agreeing a shared focus.

As part of their support and development co-mentors were expected to attend a regional Training Day and two Gathering Days (see Chapter 4.5 and 4.6).

The key principles, processes and procedures underpinning **REFLECT** were articulated in a co-mentoring framework (see Chapter 3.1) within the Handbook. This framework was adapted from research on mentoring conducted in The Netherlands for a project Lifelong Learning in Music (Renshaw, 2006). The conceptual frame was illustrated by examples taken from comments of the mentoring team at The Sage Gateshead (2007, pp.10 - 21). The structure of this framework comprised the following elements:

Definitions of roles related to mentoring: e.g. buddying; shadowing; counselling; advising; tutoring; instructing; facilitating; coaching; mentoring; co-mentoring

- Characteristics of an effective mentoring relationship
- Main elements of a co-mentoring process
- Relationship between the co-mentors
- Reflective practice
- Reflexive practice
- Characteristics of effective co-mentors