**eWIN**

Workforce
Information
Network
**Portal**

**NHS**

**Health Education North West**

# Hot Topic: Building Learning & Development Excellence

Building Learning & Development Excellence is the title given to a Competency Framework and Development Programme aimed at supporting Learning and Development (L&D) leaders to lead high performing L&D functions. The resource recognises the pivotal role of learning and development functions in enabling a workforce that is; fit for purpose, flexible to service and patient need, and aligned to the quality and productivity agenda.

With over 203,000 staff working in patient health care across 41 NHS providers in the North West, the challenge to meet the range and scale of learning and development needs requires those leading and delivering it to be ever creative, responsive and visible. Building Learning and Development Excellence is informed by both a robust evidence base and the valuable insights of those leading and delivering learning and development across the North West.

Addressing the attributes of a high performing learning and development function, the links with educational governance and key competencies of learning and development leads, the framework aims to maximise the significant investment in learning and development and enable a sustainable workforce, equipped to deliver the highest quality healthcare service.

With the Constitution part of NHS legal duty, the framework charts the course that learning and development functions should be taking to ensure that all staff are supported by the tools, training and opportunities they require to develop and progress.

## Background

NHS North West produced *The Workforce, Education Commissioning and Education and Learning Strategy (2009)* which recognised the need to support those who lead L&D functions. This was with the aim of enhancing the capacity and capability of the L&D workforce to ensure that the value of education and learning is recognised and understood at every level of an organisation and there is a single and transparent educational governance framework in place.

A competency framework was designed that specifically identifies the attributes of a high performing L&D function. This offers L&D leads and their executive leads a foundation for understanding and realising the organisational contribution that the L&D function can make to an organisation.

The competency framework was developed with strong involvement of learning leaders from across NHS organisations in the North West. Data collection methods included desk top and literature searching and a range of interviews with key stakeholders including board level executive directors with responsibility for managing L&D.

The Skills for Health (SFH) health function map informed the choice of competences to support the competency statements and these should be used for any competence-based education and training to support learning leaders.

The first version of the Competency Framework entitled *Building Learning & Development Excellence* was tested by four different types of Provider Trusts within the Cheshire & Mersey L&D leads network in 2010/11. The network recognised that the introduction of an L&D competency framework that assesses competence against a defined set of attributes of a high performing L&D function should be an essential tool to support continuous service improvement for the function and professional development for the L&D team.

The four Trusts undertook a self-assessment and peer review process and completed a table-top exercise to evaluate the process, providing recommendations that included revision to the framework and the development of guidelines and a tool-kit for using the Framework.
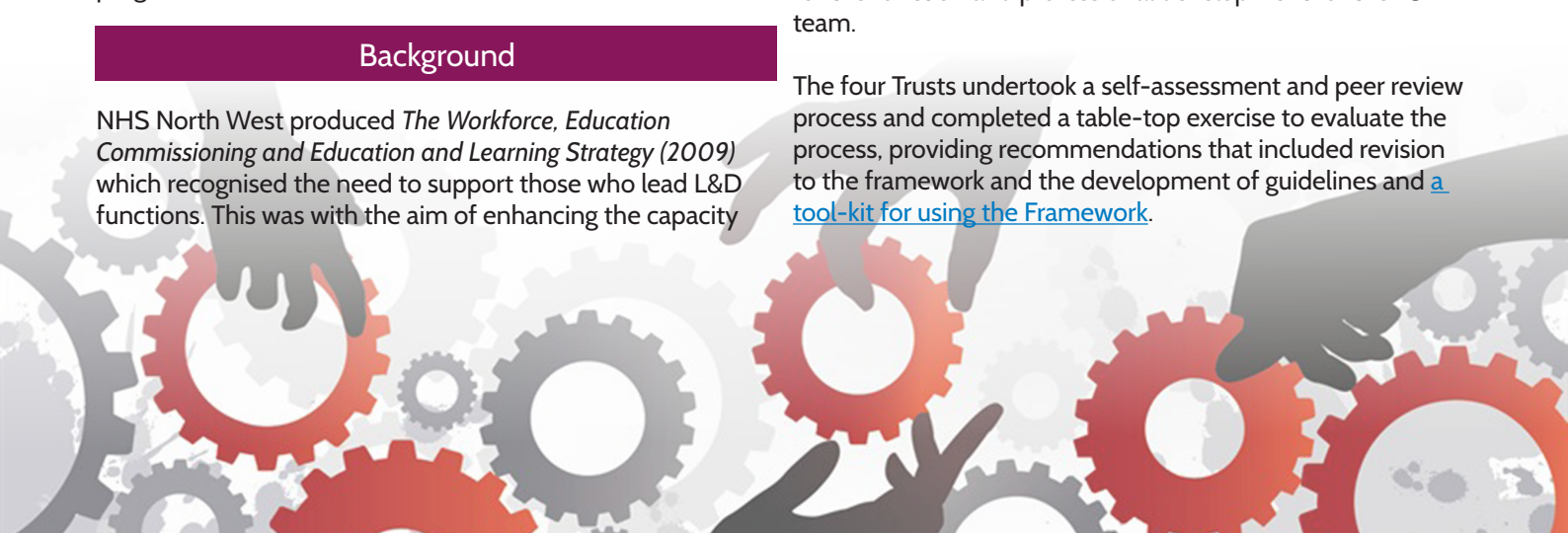
The toolkit includes:

- Electronic self-assessment tool
- Guidelines of the presentation of portfolio of evidence
- Peer review process and templates
- Action Planning template

Education governance was also identified as a key feature of a high performing L&D function. This is because educational governance provides a comprehensive framework through which the L&D function can set standards and design systems and processes aimed at ensuring the ability of the organisation to control and continually improve the quality of its educational and learning provision and performance. An embedded, effective educational governance approach will demonstrate in practice the organisational commitment and value to L&D.

The Competency Framework describes 7 high level domains, which ensure that the L&D function:

- is organisationally aligned, integrated, adaptive and responsive
- has a clear strategy and delivery plan
- drives a positive learning culture, supporting the organisation, team and the individual's development
- is delivered through effective Team Leadership and self-development
- is delivered through effective systems and processes
- ensures robust design, delivery, assessment and commissioning of education and training activities
- is underpinned by evaluation and evidence

Each domain has a set of competency statements that are mapped to the relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS)

consider ways that attainment of these can be supported. Such an assessment could be helpful for presentation to Boards, with the aim of gaining their understanding and commitment. This would ensure that the L&D function is developed in such a way that its contribution as a key organisational business unit is as strong as it can be.

As well as providing an assessment of current performance and level of competence for the L&D function other benefits include:

- The use of evidence to benchmark against other L&D functions
- Provides evidence to support monitoring of the Trust Learning & Development Agreement with HEE NW.
- The output from self-assessment will inform L&D service planning and could support potential change management programme
- Identification of development gaps will inform team Learning Needs Analysis and succession planning

Health Education North West has commissioned a Development Programme for L&D Leaders based on analysis of Learning Needs identified through use of the competency framework. The majority of the master class programme is delivered by Prospect Business Consulting Ltd with sessions on return on investment awareness delivered by abdi Ltd. Trust L&D leads wishing to access this programme will be required to complete a self-assessment of their L&D function prior to attending the programme.

Several experienced L&D Leaders in the North West who have completed the programme have agreed to act as assessors for any NHS Trust in the North West wishing to undertake the peer review process. For further details please contact Gaye Jackson at gaye.jackson@nw.hee.nhs.uk

## Benefits

Building Learning & Development Excellence sets out the expectations clearly, as well as the desired competence elements that should be evident in any L&D function. It provides a focus for L&D teams and those with organisational accountability for the management of the function. The framework has relevance for all involved in setting the strategic direction, conditions, and deployment of L&D resources.

Implementation of Building Learning & Development Excellence should be helpful in raising corporate understanding and ambition for its L&D function. The framework can be used by organisations to undertake a self-assessment, exploring whether they can demonstrate the features of a high performing L&D function. A peer review can provide objectivity and add value to the self-assessment process.

The assessment can consider whether the required learning leadership competencies are available, identify any gaps and

## Next Steps

Following the development programme for L&D leaders. participants from the first and second cohort were keen to establish a NW L&D Network and discussions are therefore underway around the best way to develop this.

A third and final cohort is running from September 2013 over a 6 month period.

For more information, contact

Gaye Jackson
Head of Continuing Personal Development
and Education Partnerships
Health Education North West
gaye.jackson@nw.hee.nhs.uk
0161 625 7303

www.ewin.nhs.uk
@eWIN_Portal

For further information on eWIN case studies and Hot Topics, contact Christine Stewart - Christine.Stewart@nw.hee.nhs.uk