Benefits of Buddying: weighing up the pros and cons of induction mentoring for councillors

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# Contents

Executive Summary and Recommendations 3

Introduction 5

A unique context for learning 5

Types of learning and support needs amongst politicians 6

Buddying / induction mentoring 8

Political mentoring 12

Coaching 17

Recommendations 21

Acknowledgements 25

## Appendices

1. Sunderland City Council Account Manager role description 26
2. Sunderland City Council Account Manager Monthly Task List sample 27
3. Training member coaches - Suggested topics 29
4. Sample coaching agreement 30
5. Sample coaching questions for use in a PDP setting 32
6. A shared coaching resource to support members 33
7. References 34
Benefits of Buddying: weighing up the pros and cons of induction mentoring for councillors

Executive Summary

- This report was commissioned by the North East and Yorkshire and Humber Employers Organisations to help evaluate the use and impact of councillor induction buddyng schemes compared with other learning and support approaches for elected members, and identify options for working across regions to support new and serving councillors in the North. The report draws on desk research and interviews with people coordinating and directly providing support to councillors.

- The political sphere is a unique learning environment which is distinct from the work place. Learning and development assumptions and approaches taken from the workplace do not easily translate to this context. This poses many challenges for those who want to assemble help and support for elected members.

- Councillors have a wide range of learning, support and development needs which reflect the complexity, pressure and competitiveness of political life. They are willing or able to identify some of these needs more readily than others. Flexibility of learning support provision is important and a range of methods are appropriate, such as induction mentoring (member and officer), political mentoring for councillors in new roles/ groups or in new circumstances, and coaching. There is limited evidence to confirm whether or not any of these methods is really effective in the political context.

- Buddying is generally arranged within political groups with little or no involvement on the part of Members' Services officers. Newly elected members are matched with experienced ones who can ‘show them the ropes’ in the first few weeks and months. There is little or no evidence of its impact beyond the anecdotal, which is by nature selective. Where relationships have been effective, new councillors report that an induction mentor helped them with practical and logistical issues. At their worst, mentors did not make time for their mentees, or they passed on negative attitudes, misinformation or ‘bad habits’. Offering training to prospective mentors can help. Alternatively, comprehensive induction programmes organised by the council can provide the necessary logistical and practical help. Another option is to provide officer buddies or nominated liaison officers to provide a consistent level of defined support.

- Political mentors are sometimes used to support a serving councillor who takes up a new role, such as Leader, portfolio holder or scrutiny chair. Mentors and mentees are usually matched by a third party but are sometimes arranged by politicians using their own networks. Political mentors made available via LGA are known as Accredited Peers and have been through a selection process. Mentoring is fraught with issues of personality and concerns about relative status and knowledge. Judgement, humility and sensitivity are essential for the mentor to establish trust. Help and advice is available in the Political Mentoring Toolkit from City University (produced for LGA). In the absence of monitoring and evaluation data it is impossible to say whether there is substantial demand for political mentoring, or whether it has the desired impact. Research on workplace mentoring and in
Benefits of Buddying: weighing up the pros and cons of induction mentoring for councillors

other environments does suggest benefits can be achieved where there are guidelines and training for both parties so that expectations are clear.

- Coaching is relatively unused and untested with elected members but has proven effective and popular elsewhere because it is discreet, powerful, bespoke and flexible to deliver. Its key distinction from mentoring is that it is not necessary for a coach to know anything about the coachee’s role or environment in order to function: a coach facilitates another’s learning, they do not tell. Coaching has the potential to develop the whole person, and to increase self awareness and openness to other forms of learning. There are opportunities to apply coaching practice in everyday interactions with elected members and in personal development planning, as well as to build officer coaching skills for coaching elected members and sharing such resources between organisations.

- In conclusion, it is clear that there is a diverse array of needs which elected members may have at different times in their political career (as shown in the table on p21). The types of support observed in this report all have something to contribute in meeting those needs, so long as certain criteria are met and pitfalls avoided. It is possible to identify which form of help is most suitable for which types of need. Promoting the offer of mentoring and coaching to elected members is problematic as for some members to invite or accept such help can be seen as personally and politically risky. More work is needed on marketing offers of help to members.
1.0 Introduction

Induction mentoring or ‘buddying’ was showcased at the 2010 Northern regions’ Member Development Officer networking conference. It led Member Development Network coordinators to consider whether to introduce or support buddying in their own councils or to find ways of supporting it through cross-organisational working.

The North East and Yorkshire and Humber Employers Organisations commissioned this report to critically evaluate the use and impact of councillor induction buddying schemes in the UK, consider the relative impact of alternative approaches and recommend options for working together to support new councillors in the North.

The report outlines some pros and cons of induction mentoring, political mentoring at other stages of political career, and political coaching as ways of meeting the learning and support needs of members. It presents guidance how to get the most benefit from each approach, and includes some practical resources and suggestions.

This was not an exhaustive research project. It was prepared over six days with reference to the following:

• desk research into political mentoring, political coaching and other forms of support offered to councillors
• review of existing good practice guides and toolkits
• interviews with 5 officers who support members, including with coaching
• interviews with 1 elected member with considerable experience as a mentor
• interviews with 2 coordinator/providers of mentoring programmes

2.0 A unique context for learning

All of those interviewed and much of the literature available acknowledges that the political sphere is a unique learning environment which presents its own set of challenges. Agencies supporting councillor development, Democratic and Members’ Services and Member Development Officers (MDOs) aim to prepare and help councillors to do their job efficiently and well. Usually this means applying norms of learning and development support which have been tested in the workplace but which can be a poor fit with the political context.

Employees generally engage with forms of learning or support because these are overtly linked to their progression in an organisation. An employment contract and/or job description defines the actions, skills and abilities expected of the employee. There is a culture (although this was not always so) that all employees participate in learning and take responsibility for their own ongoing development. People progress relatively slowly through an organisation as they accumulate skills and knowledge. Their performance is judged by their display of certain skills and behaviours set out by the organisation. Rewards, or punishment, sometimes follow. Importantly, much of this takes place in an
open environment, where peers can observe each others’ strengths and shortcomings in terms of the organisation’s standards.

For the elected member, the learning context is very different. The community is their ‘employer’ and it seldom makes clear its precise expectations in relation to councillors’ performance. Politicians can progress with extreme rapidity in their political groups, the council and in other public fora due to a mix of their actions, events, circumstances, personalities or elections. If this happens they may need to re-cast their relationships with peers in an instant, making relationships of trust between peers, such as mentoring, tricky. The innate competitiveness of the political arena can inhibit politicians’ willingness to admit their development needs in front of peers.

Councillors need to overcome considerable hurdles to be selected and elected. They need single-mindedness and self belief. Once they have achieved a place on the council or been re-elected consistently over many years, it cannot be not surprising if they reject a model of learning and development which assumes they are insufficiently qualified for the job in some way. One MDO remarked on the significant gulf between officer and elected member cultures which always arises when working with both parties on development of joint leadership:

“Elected members genuinely struggle to understand officers. They’re suspicious of motives around development.” (MDO 5)

Demographic changes in the profile of politicians may start to shift the culture of learning amongst councillors. In recent years some councils have seen an influx of younger, working members, particularly women, whose attitude to continuous personal development and learning has been shaped in the modern workplace. One MDO who had seen their council’s member profile shift in this way observed:

“Younger members relish learning and development. For others, if we call it support, the take up increases.” (MDO 2).

Another commented on the council having 20 new members at the previous election:

“They are younger and have a different ethos.” (MDO 4)

Selecting and promoting support for new and experienced councillors which they value and make use of requires regular reassessment, good judgement and sensitive handling.

### 3.0 Types of learning and support needs amongst politicians

The starting point for the design of appropriate support, either at induction or a later stage, is to identify what needs it is intended to meet. This report looks at generic, personal and role-related support rather than the acquisition of specific technical, regulatory or policy information. Generally,
Councillors are keen to engage with the latter kind of learning which provides new information, particularly when they are newly elected or have recently taken up a new role.

Councillors have a lot to contend with. Many fit their council work around other volunteering commitments, full time work and caring responsibilities. Alongside this they juggle political party and group infrastructure and demands. Scrutiny, committee chairing, portfolio holder or other cabinet roles add to the pressure. Councils provide varying degrees of administrative and ICT support or help with managing case work. According to the National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2010, councillors spent on average 23 hours per week on council/political business. Asked to choose from a list of eight resources or learning opportunities they require, councillors ranked ICT support (21%) and administrative support (21%) highest. This suggests a demand for help with managing volume and breadth of workload.

The ComRes State of Local Government (2009) report asked councillors to name the least enjoyable part of their role. These were largely related to the slow pace of change and unproductive calls on their time such as long and unnecessary meetings. Other issues included ‘unnecessary party politics/political infighting’ (8%) and ‘Lack of spare time/loss of private life’ (5%). (p.21)

Handling the complex inter-personal relationships and political culture places another daily demand on the active local councillor. Joseph Rowntree Fund research on Ward Councillors and Community Leadership identifies similar issues and problems sometimes raised by members:

‘...the way the local party groups operate, the nature of the relationship between the opposition and ruling party members, the role of party whips, and local selection procedures [...] issues to do with attitudes and behaviour of local groups.’ (p.40)

Many councils use role descriptions and skills frameworks as the basis for personal development planning (PDP) with members. Role descriptions are seldom contentious but some tension arises when officers also seek to define the necessary skills and behaviours required to fulfill them. LGA (formerly IDeA/LGID) recently refreshed its comprehensive Political Skills Framework (PSF) and ensured that this was a member-led /consultative process. Some councillors resist what they see as an attempt to make them more like officers in that they are expected to meet certain criteria and approach the work in a defined way. For some it seems to undermine and undervalue the political dimension, and ultimately local democracy. However, many councils use the PSF or an adapted local version of it as the basis for a PDP type discussion with a councillor as a way of identifying their support and development needs.

Outside of the skills framework there are the broader social needs identified by members which they may be met through political peers, contacts in the community or affiliation to national groups such as Local Government Association or the National Association of Councillors. One MDO observed that councillors who had taken part in the LGA Leadership Academy kept in touch with peers from their cohort. Another remarked that their council worked very closely with the neighbouring borough, and that this provided useful peer to peer knowledge exchange. Such opportunities provide much-needed social connections, networks and access to knowledge, particularly about how things are done.
elsewhere. Contacts from outside of the council can also be a source of advice, affirmation, a sounding board or trusted friend where this may be more difficult to sustain in the local political arena.

The role of the MDO or supporting officer is pivotal to brokering suitable support. Generic support or development needs may be identified such as time management, presentation skills, public speaking or dealing with the media. Needs in these areas can be difficult for councillors to acknowledge. Much depends on the quality of relationship they have with the MDO or person responsible for their support. Working with external providers can sometimes help councillors to admit knowledge / skills gaps.

MDOs or supporters are sometimes privy to the other more personal / psychological needs identified by councillors. Issues of in-fighting, being marginalised or even bullied within or between groups do occur. Some councillors more used to the modern regulated workplace, find the cut and thrust of political life upsetting and undermining of their confidence. Informal support often comes from fellow councillors but on occasion outside support may be sought.

Like anyone else, councillors have learning and development needs which they are not aware of and which officers supporting may not feel able to draw attention to. Again, much hinges on the quality of the relationship between the councillor and the person working to support them, if these needs are to be raised and addressed.

In the political context, it can be a challenge to provide support to councillors which is appropriate, wanted and actually taken up. Officers with this responsibility and the member committees who oversee budgets and programmes understand the need to provide maximum flexibility and diversity in terms of the support on offer. Innovations, fashions, frameworks and toolkits come along with regularity. Critically assessing the potential of these can be difficult. There tends to be little robust evaluation due to the small numbers of participants in any one programme. Members can be elusive when it comes to evaluation interviews and surveys. As with Member Development Committees and panels, those who do contribute are often the familiar enthusiasts for learning. Other voices are not always heard.

The support needs of newly elected and long-serving members are addressed with a combination of induction mentoring (‘buddying’); political Mentoring; council induction programmes; one-to-one officer support; personal development planning and training (including e-learning); handbooks / guides; and; coaching. Ultimately, the councillors involved in setting member development frameworks will take a view and will shape what is provided, which is generally a mix of the above. The section below examines some of these approaches in more detail.

### 4.0 Buddying / induction mentoring

**What is buddying?**

‘Buddying’ is a way of describing peer mentoring provided by an experienced councillor to a newly elected one, particularly in their induction period (the first few months after being elected). The main
purpose of this pairing up is to help the new councillor to find their way around the site, settle into the role and familiarise themselves with how things work. This might include sitting next to them in council meetings or accompanying them on ward walks.

Who offers buddying?

LGA (formerly LGID) provides Accredited Member Peers to train up to ten experienced councillors to ‘buddy’ new members, at a cost of £3,100. This can be deployed fairly quickly if, for example there has been a large influx of new members needing support.

MDOs report that buddying arrangements are more commonly set up within the political groups and entirely outside of the influence of Member Development or Members’ Services teams. Some councils have tried to establish and support buddying relationships but found that despite their best efforts to match up pairs, natural relationships were more likely to emerge within the groups.

“We don’t put formal arrangements in place as officers. A few years ago we trained experienced members to act as mentors. The feedback was that this best managed through the groups who do it automatically.” (MDO 3)

“This tends to happen within groups and when we have offered to set up arrangements for individuals, they just migrate back to someone they’ve found themselves.” (MDO 2)

“This is used but informally and patchily through the groups. It’s not managed corporately.” (MDO 3)

How much is buddying going on?

LGA was unable to confirm the extent of take-up of its offer, which is not monitored separately from other deployment of Accredited Peers via its Peer Clearing system. The training prepares mentors to be of maximum help to their buddy, and to manage themselves so as not to unduly influence new members. This provides some consistency in approach, although the ongoing relationships are not monitored or managed in any way.

Marketing

As with other forms of political mentoring, the terms buddy or mentor can be problematic. One MDO reported offering a buddy system to members but they were not keen, which she thought had been a reaction to the term ‘buddying’. One elected member confirmed that the word was off-putting.

Buddying relationships

It is also difficult to say in what ways the induction mentoring is effective. Because it largely takes place through the political groups, MDOs are seldom in a position to evaluate its impact. It tends to go on alongside a wealth of other induction support provided by the council which makes separating the impact of buddying from the wider assistance virtually impossible. It is also difficult to gauge the new member’s expectations. One MDO said,
Benefits of Buddying: weighing up the pros and cons of induction mentoring for councillors

“When I do a PDP with a new member I’ll ask how their induction buddying went. It’s generally described as a positive experience.” (MDO 1)

“We brought buddying pairs together and asked how it was working. They didn’t raise any major issues. It pretty much worked. Relationships dissolved as they found their feet.” (MDO 3)

Just because a councillor offers themselves as a buddy, does not mean they are necessarily best placed to assist the new member. This can be a highly influential relationship which helps to set attitudes and expectations for the future. There is a danger of the experienced member passing on their own negative experiences as cynicism, or presenting unhelpful behaviours as ‘the norm’. Not all political groups train or prepare the members who offer themselves as buddies for the role. One MDO reflected that mentors provided by the groups, ‘..often don’t know what they’re doing, and potentially do more harm than good.’ Research by Joseph Rowntree Foundation noted that,

*Mentoring was identified [by councillors] as a helpful form of induction and training although one person suggested that, in many cases, it encouraged new councillors to adopt some of the old bad habits of old councillors." (Page 29)

An MDO in one council reported that they were supporting a recently elected member whose experience of their ‘buddy’ was so negative that it had seriously impacted on the member’s confidence and commitment. In another case, the buddy assigned to a new member was a ward colleague, which was a little claustrophobic.

As with other forms of political mentoring, time is an issue:

“Some newly elected members were supposed to be mentored by senior politicians but there were issues about time and expectations. In reality they experienced politician hadn’t found the time.” (MDO 1)

The ward walk may present a useful opportunity for the new and the experienced councillors to each gain from the buddying relationship. One experienced mentor describes how this can be an opportunity for the new member to ask questions about roles, processes and issues with real purpose. The more experienced member can help the other to translate their knowledge about and passion for their ward and community into effective action on the wider council. The more experienced councillor benefits from exposure to the energy and enthusiasm of the new member.

One MDO observed that,

“In the early stages the help they need is logistical, practical. it needn’t be about tricky relationships at that point. “

It was observed that buddying relationships generally dissolved as the new member found their feet or gravitated to another colleague with whom they were more in tune for help. The relationship may be sustained but its nature was liable to change once the new member’s original needs are met.
Officer buddies and enhanced induction

Councils are continually refreshing their induction programmes for new members. Many provide pithily presented information such as quick start guides or top tips aimed at helping members find their feet. Yorkshire and Humber region provide lots of cross-organisational induction support, which can help with networking and knowledge exchange. Since one newly elected member reported that he did not know which door he was supposed to enter the building by, Leeds City Council always provides a tour of the building within a ‘finding your feet’ session. Several MDOs reported that it is effective to involve serving councillors in helping to deliver induction programmes.

Some councils provide officer ‘buddies’ whose specific role is to be a single point of contact, help and information.

“For logistical, practical support, we would consider using officer mentoring for new members at the induction phase. The Political Mentoring Toolkit helps.” (MDO 1)

But in another council the MDO said, “We considered officer buddying for members but members weren’t keen.” (MDO 4)

Sunderland City Council has taken officer buddying a step further. All members are assigned and introduced to an Account Manager of their own (See Role Description at Appendix 1). These are volunteer staff drawn from services which would normally entail some contact with councillors but not senior roles. At first, new members are encouraged to see their Account Manager as the first port of call for ‘daft questions’, information and practical or logistical support. They can help with general ICT (blackberries, email, new passwords etc), signposting on policy issues or making contact with the appropriate officer on a given topic. They may even do a ward walk and help the elected member identify who to talk to about environmental issues.

The member and Account Manager meet formally each month. Account Managers are issued with a monthly Task List (see example at Appendix 2) which includes important information to share with members, and any issues where feedback is sought. They routinely discuss the member's learning and development needs and anything else that may arise. This takes the place of formal PDPs. In some cases, where they have the confidence and experience, the Account Manager may introduce an element of coaching into conversations. Officers overseeing the Account Manager system can see the potential to extend the relationship into something more developmental. (See section 6).

Another council offers separate specialist officer buddies for ICT help, and ward coordinators for local support. Other individuals are there to help councillors, each playing to their strengths and specialist knowledge.

Although an officer buddy or Account Manager may be well placed to provide a consistent, neutral signposting and information role, an officer buddy can be of no help when it comes to negotiating the
Benefits of Buddying: weighing up the pros and cons of induction mentoring for councillors

political territory, and the new councillor is likely to rely on political colleagues for that part of their induction.

There is a danger that councillors draw officer buddies into ‘political assistant’ territory, so all parties must be clear at the outset about the limits of the types of help on offer.

How to get the most out of buddies

The following learning points could help councils offer the best of buddying to newly elected members:
• work with the political groups to offer training to willing buddies/mentors so that pitfalls can be avoided
• clearly explain to new councillors what they can expect of their buddies, alongside other forms of support and information
• distinguish between the ‘getting to know where things are and how they work’ from the political feet-finding aspects of buddying, and consider using officers for the former
• develop a straightforward, no-blame process for ending the relationship
• encourage practically focussed support such as ward walks or at surgeries
• monitor the take-up and duration of buddying relationships
• use first PDPs to evaluate the impact with new members
• get the perspective of the mentor and identify what they have learned
• offer ILM accreditation to mentors to encourage training to be taken up.

5.0 Political mentoring

Having considered induction mentoring it is helpful to look at other forms of political mentoring and how they can meet ongoing learning and support needs.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is sometimes offered to councillors who have taken on a new role, such as a leader, scrutiny chair or portfolio holder. LGA provides a political mentoring service by matching an Accredited Peer (mentor) with the mentee. The mentor is drawn from the same party but from a different council. The aim is for the mentor to help the mentee to carry out their new role. At other times, people set up their own mentoring relationships within their parties (but usually between councils) by using their own networks.

There are two broad types of mentoring. One (with its roots in workplace mentoring) emphasises the passing on of ‘been there, done that’ knowledge and advice:

‘...[a] development relationship between two people; one who is personally competent and experienced in a particular field or role and another less experienced person who wants to learn from their particular skills, knowledge and experience.’ (Clutterbuck, 2011)
The other definition and approach is as a developmental relationship where the emphasis is on developing and sustaining the mentee’s capacity to perform their role - this is closer in its purpose to coaching and requires a considerable degree of skill and judgement to do successfully:

‘At its essence, mentoring is a developmental relationship, where the mentor helps the person being mentored in with a change of thinking, behaviour, attitude or performance.’ (Garvey, 2009).

A mentor usually has some experience of the role or the context that the mentee is in, whilst a coach is not expected to have this (although some will.) The distinction is significant in a political context because because of the different ways councillors, who are not like employees, may respond to being told how to do something. Chas Leslie (LGA) notes that,

“In a workplace environment it may be easier to identify and set expectations for a mentoring or coaching relationship. The risk for a politician in either case is in admitting a lack of knowledge and any kind of deficit. It is a very personal risk for a politician. They need to know, ‘can I trust this person?’.”

One experienced political mentor says of the word ‘mentor’,

“I wish we had a different term for it. [...] It’s very difficult for a politician to say, “I need help with this.” You don’t like to ask. It might look stupid. [...]agreeing to mentoring is like saying you’re not very good. I prefer the term ‘honest broker’ or ‘sounding board’.”

**The mentoring relationship**

It can be difficult to match up a mentee with a mentor. There are issues of perceived status, particularly linked to the kind of authority (its type, size, urban/rural geography, levels of deprivation etc) either party hails from. This was sometimes exemplified in responses to unfavorable Peer Reviews by members or officers from other councils which led to the question, ‘What can they possibly know about our local circumstances?’ One MDO referred to the limited pool of potential (Accredited Peer) mentors in certain roles (e.g. Leader, portfolio holder, Scrutiny Chair, Opposition Leader etc), and to issues of role status which can get in the way.

One political mentor stressed the importance of presenting himself as an neutral broker. When working with a mentee, he likes to stress that he is ‘just the same as [them]’. Effective mentoring is not a transactional process: it is essentially a friendship. Garvey (2009) also describes mentoring as,

‘... a learning relationship between two people. It requires trust, commitment and emotional engagement. It involves listening, questioning, challenge and support.’

According to research into workplace mentoring, to increase the chances of a successful mentoring relationship, preparation is necessary to set expectations, ensure a good ‘fit’ between the parties and establish a clear set of objectives and ground rules. The relationship between the mentor and person they are helping is all important:
"You have to have a decent introduction period... There are some people you can work with and others you realise straight away on not your cup of tea. Once you realise you won’t get along with your mentee, it’s important to withdraw quickly." (Political mentor)

One council described how they prepared cabinet members going into mentoring relationships and strongly encouraged them to advise members’ services staff if they thought a mentoring relationship was not going to work out so that a dignified exit could be managed for both parties and to save time and money.

Effective mentoring requires a good deal of judgement:

“The mentor needs to intuit how much or how little to get involved. They need to have emotional intelligence and be alert to when to approach the subject with a light touch or a more direct supportive challenge. An important factor is being able to say, I don’t know the answer. Often advice is rejected. The important thing is that the mentee is able to talk things over and discuss options with someone they can trust.” (Political mentor)

Another important factor is that both parties want to learn. Mentoring can be beneficial for the mentor:

“There are immense personal benefits for the mentor. You learn from other peoples mistakes and triumphs.” (Political mentor)

Demand for mentoring

It is difficult to judge the level of demand amongst politicians for mentoring as a form of support. One mentor suggests it is an issue of marketing and that the term ‘mentoring’ may be rejected by members: "Every councillor would like a trusted friend. Members need someone to talk to openly.” He observes a fall in demand for his own services as a peer mentor since the end of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). A willingness to invite peer challenge and peer review went hand-in-hand with CPA inspection and pre-inspection. He also cites the financial climate and the impression that visible support from for mentoring since LGA reorganisation has yet to emerge.

“It’s hard to get a handle on how much mentoring is going on and how much benefit people are getting.” (MDO 1)

None of the councils interviewed had used political mentoring via LGA in recent years. It was perceived as expensive and it had generally been the availability of Communities and Local Government (CLG) improvement funding which had led to a promotional push.

“We offered it to Cabinet members three or more years ago. It was Improvement Partnership funded: Very expensive but we got positive feedback, especially from one BME member who is still in contact with his mentor. He’s our only BME councillor so perhaps his need [for outside
support] was greater. It seems to have less benefit to the more experienced councillors who say, “You can’t teach me anything”, so it’s a very personal thing.” (MDO 2)

“We don’t offer political mentoring as a rule. There’s no obvious demand. It has happened as one-offs.” (MDO 3)

“We offered it by using regional funding. We couldn’t afford to repeat it.” (MDO 4)

Other MDOs talked to would offer mentoring to a councillor if there were indications that it would help.

According to Professor Jo Silvester’s Political Mentoring Toolkit (2011), the LGA (formerly IDeA) brokered 400 political mentoring arrangements from 2006. LGA does not maintain a record of the amount of contact actually provided by its Accredited Peer mentors, so it is difficult to assess how many relationships proceeded or how long they lasted.

**Impact of mentoring**

Professor Silvester interviewed 62 political mentors or mentees and surveyed 215 councillors and officers in preparing the Political Mentoring Toolkit. It provides a comprehensive good practice guide for political mentoring based on members’ experience, but does not include any quantitative data which helps establish the impact and benefits of political mentoring.

The LGA points to the difficulties in evaluating mentoring relationships as the details of the relationship and what is discussed are confidential to those involved. In brokering Political Mentoring, LGA creates a contract with a local authority to provide accredited peers as mentors. The authority generally provides an anonymous profile of the member seeking a mentor via the council’s Member Development Officer or LGA Regional Adviser. LGA do not normally know the identity of a prospective mentee and do not follow the relationship up once it has been brokered. Some political mentors provide anecdotal evidence of successful mentoring relationships which have led to improved working between a leader and their cabinet or an upgrading in CPA ratings, for example.

Local authorities are likely to ask mentees about the impact of any mentoring in PDP sessions. When asked, MDOs who could recall political mentoring being used by their council recalled a mixed response:

“We had 5 or 6 who had a political mentor. A couple went ok. The other relationships dissolved without much apparent benefit.” [MDO 4]

One area that has been more closely evaluated is the mentoring of prospective members in an effort to encourage under-represented groups to stand for election. Home Office commissioned research evaluating the impact of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women Councillors Task Force (2011), showed that mentoring, as one part of a programme to encourage BAME women to stand for election did have a positive benefit. It led to a, “…statistically significant improvement in their understanding of what it means to be a councillor.” (p.61) It also noted that making the mentoring
arrangements was challenging and that some serving councillors were ill-prepared to help mentee and did not make sufficient time to do so.

Despite the lack of firm data, it is reasonable to assume that political mentoring can be beneficial as there is significant research in other walks of life (workplace mentoring, youth mentoring etc) to suggest that given the right support and conditions, people can get substantial benefit from being mentored.

The relationship between mentor and mentee needs to be finely judged and balanced. Again, drawing from workplace mentoring research, David Clutterbuck (2011) identifies a number of things which can work against mentoring and which are applicable in the political context:

- inadequate training of mentors and mentees
- insufficient clarity upfront about what the mentee wants to achieve and how the mentor can help
- incompatible mentors and mentees (due to values, politics, extent to which their environment is similar, personality)
- difficulties in scheduling meetings, and letting the relationship slip
- a lack of understanding of the developmental role on the part of the mentor
- a lack of support in the organisational context.

The Political Skills Toolkit suggests political mentors need to make sure they do not:

- tell mentees what to do
- assume that mentoring always works
- ignore the limits of [their] own knowledge
- be closed to new ways of doing things
- assume there is just one best way.

**How to get the best from political mentoring**

The following learning points could help councils offer the best of political mentoring:

- Training: Research shows that training just the mentor raises the success rate to around 65%. Programmes which train both parties are able to gain successes of around 90% and above (Clutterbuck, 2011).
- Mentee has final say who is their mentor
- Have some form of mentoring contract which sets clear objectives for both parties, emphasises confidentiality and defines how often and where meetings will take place
- Measuring and monitoring progress of the relationships helps to keep the mentoring relationship on track and encourages good practice. This requires both both parties to review the relationship and what they are gaining from it. Without revealing confidential information, participants can be asked whether they:
  - have a clear sense of purpose
  - have achieved any of the mentee’s personal development objectives or goals, or set new ones
  - what else they have learned or found useful
  - are willing to engage in mentoring of others in the future
• Refer to City University’s Political Mentoring Toolkit (November 2011) for advice on setting up mentoring programmes, questions and answers to help mentors and mentees prepare, and tactics for getting started.

6.0 Coaching

What is coaching?
Coaching as a form of learning and development support has gained ground in the workplace in recent years, especially amongst executives and senior managers because it is bespoke to individual needs, can be delivered flexibly around a busy schedule, is discreet and has impact.

A coach is focused on enhancing the skills, strengths and potential of the individual, not on drawing attention to absent knowledge and experience. A coach supports the coachee to identify, reflect on and test out possible ways forward, rather than offering advice or their own experience. It is primarily a developmental relationship. A coach does not need to have any knowledge of the coachee’s role and environment. They facilitate the coachee in finding their own answers. They do not tell. Some mentors will use a coaching style to support a mentee but not necessarily have the background of skills and understanding to operate fully in a coaching role. The coaching role is more explicitly developmental than mentoring. It usually involves working towards clearly defined goals chosen by the coachee.

Coaching can help by building self-awareness, self-management and self-confidence. There are specific approaches which help to maintain resilience and positivity which can help with pressure and work/life balance. As with an effective mentor, a coach can hold up a metaphorical mirror, help an individual to identify blind spots, be a ‘reality checker’ and a trusted confidant for those who feel isolated as a consequence of their leadership roles.

MDOs reported that members who have requested coaching have referred to issues such as dealing with the impact of making unpopular and difficult decisions (especially implementing post-Spending Review cuts), dealing with bullying or sexism in the group or from political opponents, and general leadership, resilience and wellbeing issues.

The business case for coaching, based on the ease of deployment and the cost-benefit ratio has been made in organisations worldwide, from multi-national corporations to governmental bodies.

Is the culture conducive to officers coaching members?
Coaching is seldom used with elected members, although many councils will offer it. One reason seems to be the ‘marketing’ of coaching, as with mentoring. Accepting a coach may be seen as admitting a lack or development need, which may be politically or personally risky. Coaching is not always easy to define and is likely to suffer from the same ‘marketing’ difficulties with members as mentoring can. One MDO commented:

“We’d have some work to do with members about what coaching is!”
“If you said [to a member], ‘you might like a coach’, it might not feel too comfortable.”  

(MDO 1)

Cultures vary hugely between councils. In some there is a sufficient sense of partnership between elected members and officers that it is feasible that trained officers could coach elected members. In others this would be unthinkable and external officer coaches or professional coaches may be more acceptable. If a coaching culture has been established amongst officers in the council, this can help, especially if the chief executive and corporate directors speak openly and positively of coaching experience.

Some MDOs felt that they may be too close to, or too closely associated with the longer-serving members to enter a coaching relationship. It could be hard to remain objective when they are familiar with certain personalities and behaviours. MDOs also commented on their difficulty in shifting from the role of ‘the one who will do that for you’, to one of coaching councillors into taking responsibility for their own development.

Members are understandably anxious about being seen to fritter resources on fads or non-essentials. Coaching is an unregulated market with some coaches who work with the most high profile leaders of organisations charging eye-watering fees. There are also examples of adverse press reporting of senior elected members who have worked with a professional coach. An internal coaching resource, or a pre-approved pool of coaches commissioned through the Employers’ Organisation at reasonable rates, can be a way to tackle this objection. With such arrangements, coaching could provide greater value for money than brokered political mentoring.

Some councils had brought external coaches into work with members following issues raised in PDP conversations. This included general leadership development and in one case practical, specialist support on giving presentations.

Building an acceptance of coaching as a way of supporting members will mean working with wiling members first. As with mentoring, a coaching relationship cannot be forced or imposed. Growing the use and acceptance of coaching in any context tends to rely on ‘early adopters’ who ‘spread the word’ about its benefits to peers. Sceptics will need to observe visible benefits in others to be convinced but a tipping point can be reached where it becomes the norm and an accepted part of the array of support of offer.

Turning a PDP discussion into something more transformational

The personal development or support planning session between an officer and a member can provide a good opportunity to shift the discussion to a more developmental one by using a coaching approach to a greater or lesser degree. Newly elected members may be particularly receptive to this approach in their first PDPs as they are often prepared to acknowledge being at the start of a huge learning curve. The sheer amount of information and knowledge the new councillor needs to acquire can bring other issues, such as a lack of confidence, into the open allowing the MDO to offer appropriate support.
PDPs generally follow a self-assessment format against a set of pre-determined skills and requirements (which the member does not necessarily agree with or commit to fulfilling). The approach is to identify skills gaps and development needs, or what is ‘lacking’. This deficit model is not conducive to building members’ positive commitment to development. For the longer serving and more experienced councillor, the PDP is often something to be endured. A councillor may deflect an officer’s attempts to press them into acknowledging needs or committing to a learning opportunities. In this case, MDOs observe that:

“It can be difficult to have a natural conversation about skills. Coaching questions might make this easier. [...] It’s too easy for councillors to bat away gentle challenge and come up with an example of when they’ve used a certain skill which makes it difficult to push them.” (MDO 2)

In this transactional approach, the focus is on getting through the list and recording information. What gets measured gets attention, which can mean other needs are not explored.

Some PDP discussions or pre-work are looser, and deliberately focus on the positive, stating with an Appreciative Inquiry approach about what is working well in a particular role, and what strengths are in play. Members are asked about their personal priorities and goals and asked open questions about the support which will best meet their needs. One MDO said,

“It’s a quality conversation. The PDP is a tool but not just for pure recording. This means you can go off down an avenue and explore: What’s going on for you? What do you need?...I guess it’s undercover coaching.” (MDO 1)

One way of increasing the councillor’s commitment to take action would be by using a series of coaching questions which help them to imagine the real and political benefits of such learning. The discussion would be framed as more positive, more transformational and more geared to the councillors genuine commitment to act. Suggested sample coaching questions for the PDP context are included in Appendix 5.

**Building in-house coaching resources**

In the Yorkshire and Humber region, eight officers underwent initial coaching training using Nancy Kline’s *Time to Think* model. Five are going on to use coaching approaches in their discussions with members, and provide peer supervision to each other through a regular Action Learning Set. The format can include sharing experiences and practicing coaching using role play, observation and feedback. Recently, other officers who support members in the region have been introduced to the potential of coaching through regionally delivered Masterclasses.

In Sunderland, the Account Managers who provide officer support to members are encouraged to build a developmental relationship with members as well as performing the more transactional tasks of signposting, providing information and acting as a conduit for feedback:
"In a way, the Account Managers are a halfway house [between an officer buddy and a coach] - they have the potential to become a coaching resource to elected members. [...] the potential to become something really valuable." (MDO 5)

Sunderland has a reasonable number of officer coaches and a commitment to coaching as part of leadership development generally. All coaches receive regular supervision and have active caseloads. Account Managers (who are not generally trained coaches) are coached by others in the ‘softer’ skills around building rapport, and extending the discussion with members into more supportive territory.

One Account Manager who is also an experienced coach, supports the Council Leader. This is a relationship which has developed over several years into a coaching one. Moving into a coaching mode with the Leader and another Cabinet member was incremental but it is not covert. The Leader openly acknowledges and recommends this to colleagues.

The Account Manager helps the politicians with a safe and neutral space to reflect on their leadership style and values. They can use the time to rehearse arguments and test out ideas, as well as to build self awareness and resilience. There is therapeutic value but mostly it is about enhancing personal leadership. They never discuss political ambitions.

“The Account Manager role is positively about creating that kind of relationship. It requires the absolute integrity of the officer. They must never abuse that.” (MDO 5)

Training for officers who wish to offer coaching to members ought to be configured to meet their unique needs in the political context. This could mean including, for example, an understanding of authentic leadership, how to maintain resilience and wellbeing and decision-making or problem solving techniques. A suggested outline of the content for a tailored training programme is included at Appendix 3.

**Formal coaching**

When and if coaching moves to a level where it is acknowledged, it is important to clarify the conditions under which it will continue. Some of these, such as confidentiality, will have been established in the course of the relationship. Other will need to be set and agreed by both parties. A sample agreement is attached as Appendix 4.

**Cross organisational coaching**

Many councils, including those in the North East region, have developed a cohort of coaches trained to a high standard (Level 6) in Northumbria University’s Advanced Diploma in Leadership and Performance Coaching. They provide peer coaching to officers within and across partner organisations. There are incentives for establishing a shared resource of coaches who can work across and between organisations and a number of considerations. These are set out in Appendix 6.

**How to get the best from coaching**
Benefits of Buddying: weighing up the pros and cons of induction mentoring for councillors

- Work with members to describe and market coaching as a potentially valuable type of support for them
- Work with early adopters and encourage them to share their positive experiences with colleagues
- If the culture of officer-member relations allows, consider training officers in coaching techniques, either informal (in PDPs) or formal coaching
- Provide adequate levels of training for the level of coaching to be provided. Ensure coaches do not overreach themselves.
- Develop a tailored training programme which can help coaches to meet the particular needs of politicians
- Ensure appropriate supervision for coaches
- Continuously monitor and evaluate coaching impact to make an ongoing business case
- Consider ways of providing coaching between and across organisations so that access is improved, impact monitored and costs managed.

7.0 Recommendations

More so than in the workplace, it is necessary to flex the learning and support offer to elected members in order to be able to engage them, sustain their attention and have a positive impact.

The table below lists a wide range of learning and support needs which have been drawn from various sources including the interviews carried out for this report, research literature and toolkits/good practice guidance based on councillor feedback. In each case, based on the assessments of support approaches in this report, the most suitable form of support, on balance, is recommended.

Different approaches will work better for different individuals, but where councils are looking to provide a consistently high quality of support, some regulation or oversight is ideal and the limitations and of different methods must be recognised. Good evaluation frameworks can be put in place and provide the best assurance that projects are working well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified learning and support needs</th>
<th>Most suitable form of support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For newly-elected councillors:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to go in the council building(s): car parking, security pass, canteen, admin support, members’ rooms, toilets</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who to go to for information or help: members’ services, support staff, organisational directory</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who does what. The key members of staff I need to know.</td>
<td>Induction / officer buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with occupational health / accessibility issues</td>
<td>Induction / officer buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One to one help with ICT set up and trouble-shooting</td>
<td>Officer buddy / ICT specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified learning and support needs</td>
<td>Most suitable form of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding members allowances and expenses: rules and process for claiming</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To feel comfortable and confident in the role</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding code of conduct, Standards and council culture</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding procedures and etiquette in the council chamber</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casework management support or advice</td>
<td>Political mentor / Officer buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support with making my first speech or intervention in council</td>
<td>Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General introduction to e.g. overview and scrutiny, finance, planning, adult safeguarding, street-scene in the council</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand member-officer relationships</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get essential information for e.g. licensing or planning committees</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand my corporate parenting responsibilities</td>
<td>Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand my network and learn more about the party</td>
<td>Political Group mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with the media</td>
<td>Induction /specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairing skills</td>
<td>Induction /specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to discuss personal development needs</td>
<td>Officer buddy /specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange ward walks with an appropriate officer</td>
<td>Officer buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with speed reading / digesting briefing materials</td>
<td>Induction /specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting relevant facts and figures about my ward</td>
<td>Officer buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing my community leadership role</td>
<td>Induction / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with the opposition</td>
<td>Political mentor /coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building productive political relationships</td>
<td>Political mentor /coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining exposure in the party</td>
<td>Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate political vision</td>
<td>Political mentor /coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain unwritten rules</td>
<td>Political mentor/ Officer buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know my strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand how I come across / impact on others</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think more strategically about issues in my ward</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified learning and support needs</td>
<td>Most suitable form of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For councillors in new roles:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help me understand my role (e.g. scrutiny chair, portfolio holder, partnership board member)</td>
<td>Political mentor/ Officer buddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get technical knowledge</td>
<td>Specialist officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help adjusting to opposition</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help adjusting to power</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support when I have to look strong and in control but don’t feel it</td>
<td>Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with understanding or shifting my leadership style</td>
<td>Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working out how to achieve my goals</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with re-building a political group</td>
<td>Political mentor /coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as a sounding board for my ideas</td>
<td>Political mentor /coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share knowledge and experience with me</td>
<td>Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggest other ways to do things</td>
<td>Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help me find solutions to problems</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play devil’s advocate when I share new ideas or strategies</td>
<td>Political mentor /coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous learning for all councillors:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral, non judgmental support</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A trusted friend or sounding board</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know about what’s been tried elsewhere</td>
<td>Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest feedback and affirmation</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with time management / prioritisation / work life balance</td>
<td>Coach / specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone to think out loud with</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with managing my behaviour</td>
<td>Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with ICT</td>
<td>Officer buddy /specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and using new media</td>
<td>Officer buddy /specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A chance to talk to councillors from other areas about how they do things</td>
<td>Political mentor / networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share my experiences</td>
<td>Political mentor / networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A chance to rehearse my arguments with someone neutral</td>
<td>Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified learning and support needs</td>
<td>Most suitable form of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with personal development</td>
<td>Officer buddy /coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A critical friend</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to reflect</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A second opinion</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with reputational damage</td>
<td>Coach / specialist /political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss solutions to new issues</td>
<td>Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an alternative perspective in a safe setting</td>
<td>Coach / Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone to intervene on my behalf</td>
<td>Political mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social contact / networks which provide other perspectives from outside the political sphere</td>
<td>Networks and community connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with mediating and resolving problems in my community</td>
<td>Coach / specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining emotional resilience in the face of difficult issues</td>
<td>Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having to make and deal with the consequences of unpopular decisions</td>
<td>Coach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Marketing**

As discussed, there are fundamental issues about promoting the offer of buddy ing, mentoring and coaching to elected members because it can be problematic for some members to acknowledge skills gaps or the need for help from others. This is a fundamental and longstanding issue for those seeking to support members. There is potential to learn lessons from professional marketing and from its application in social campaigns (see [http://www.thecampaigncompany.co.uk/](http://www.thecampaigncompany.co.uk/)) which appeal to the different values of the target audience. Similarly, an understanding of personality type can be helpful in crafting messages and promotional materials which are more likely to have a positive impact. Learning from these areas could be particularly helpful for councils keen to promote the take up of coaching, for example.
Acknowledgments
This report was produced for Jill Rouse and Karen Weaver of the the North East and Yorkshire and Humber Employers Organisations respectively.

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Mike Frankland, Sunderland City Council
Cathy Mordecai, Sunderland City Council
Kay Sidebottom, Leeds City Council
Chas Leslie, LGA

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Email: emilyasweetman.o2.co.uk
Tel: 07545 766220 or 0191 274 3730
MEMBER ACCOUNT MANAGER ROLE DEFINITION

The objective of the Account Manager is to provide support/guidance to their assigned Member(s), providing support through:

- Maintaining regular and frequent contact with Account holding Members (minimum of one contact per month)
- Encouraging Members to identify individual support priorities.
- Maintaining and updating Member’s individual Account Sharepoint site in conjunction with Members and the Member Development Team
- Liaising with identified ‘technical’ lead Officers to progress action on Account support priorities within the areas of:
  - Member Support - Administration and Equipment
  - Member Support - Skills, Knowledge and Briefings
- Ensuring that Accounts are updated to reflect changes in roles and responsibilities of individual Members
- Encouraging Members to maximise take-up and use of IT
- Promoting confidentiality at all times
- Signposting Members to appropriate officers/information resources for queries relating to casework

MEMBER ACCOUNT MANAGER KEY BEHAVIOURS

Account Managers will be:

- discrete, tactful and diplomatic
- efficient and professional in dealings with Members
- friendly, approachable and accessible and effective listeners
- trustworthy and responsible in adopting a proactive approach to Account management and in managing expectations
- committed to high standards of customer care
- committed to their own personal development in order to deliver the role effectively
- advocates and exponents of the use of IT
Sunderland City Council Account Manager Monthly Task List (Sample)

NOVEMBER TASK LIST

COMMUNITY NEWS

The Leader is keen for all Members to actively undertaken ward walks within their wards, this will help them to identify issues first hand and promote their community leadership role.

Has your Member taken a lead/ taken action on a local issue, either something they have identified personally or in response to a matter a constituent has raised, which has made a difference? Could this be used within Community News as a good news story?

CHILDREN’S SERVICES WORKSHOP

Please remind Members that Children’s Services have a drop in session on 31st October 2011 between 3pm - 6pm, Committee Room 5 to discuss changes in how services are delivered through Children's Centre Networks

Members have requested the opportunity for individual discussion and this session will allow them to share their views on how the service might be reshaped before we commence a wider public consultation process.

Officers from Children’s Services will be available between the hours shown and Members are invited to attend at a time which is most convenient to them.

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

The Customer Complaints Procedure has recently been updated and comes into force on 1 November 2011. We are asking employees to complete an elearning module which provides an overview of the procedure and it would be useful exercise for Elected Members to complete.

Please ask Members to complete the “Customer Complaints and Feedback” module at www.learning.com/sunderland. If Members haven’t previously registered on the site, they will
Benefits of Buddying: weighing up the pros and cons of induction mentoring for councillors

need to “Create New Account” (found in the “log in” box on the right hand side of the screen. If they have any queries please telephone (0191) 566 2525 or email WDSupport@sunderland.gov.uk

ACCOUNT MANAGER INFORMATION

We are currently investigating how Elected Members might be able to use social media as part of the role in the Community. In doing so, it is also useful to identify the current knowledge of Account Managers of social media. Therefore, can you please identify below if you use (or know how they work):

☐ Social networks (these sites allow people to build personal web pages and then connect with friends to share content and communication, i.e. MySpace, Facebook and Bebo.

☐ Blogs (these are online journals, with entries appearing with the most recent first)

☐ Wikis (these websites allow people to add content to or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database. The best-known wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia.

☐ Podcasts (audio and video files that are available by subscription, through services like Apple iTunes).

☐ Forums (areas for online discussion, often around specific topics and interests.

☐ Content communities (communities which organise and share particular kinds of content. The most popular content communities tend to form around photos (Flickr), bookmarked links (del.icio.us) and videos (YouTube).

Completed task lists should be uploaded onto Sharepoint by no later than FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2011
Appendix 3

Training Member Coaches: Suggested topics for inclusion

Below is an outline of recommended content for training coaches who will work in the political sphere.

Clarifying the relationship
What characterises a developmental relationship?
Building rapport
Listening skills
Quality conversations
Confidentiality and ethics
Spotting and challenging preconceptions about elected members
Staying firmly in role of coach

Building self awareness (coach and coachee)
Knowledge of psychometrics (e.g. MBTI, Insight)
Identifying and building on strengths and values
Identifying and challenging self limiting beliefs
Authentic leadership
Considering impact on others
How to achieve win:win

Techniques for decision-making or creative thinking
e.g. 6 thinking hats
Force field analysis
Grid analysis
5 whys

Maintaining drive and resilience
Goal setting
Spotting and challenging negative thinking
Covey’s Circle of Control
Wellbeing 5 a day
Positive psychology techniques
Sample coaching agreement

Member Coaching provided by (name of coach)

My role as a coach is to give my full attention to you and to helping you to achieve the goals you have set out for yourself. This coaching agreement is way of preparing the ground for our first and future meetings or discussions. Please read it in advance of our first meeting. Let me know if you have any questions and come prepared to sign it when we first meet.

The Member Coaching Agreement

In undertaking to meet with you, I commit to meet with you at the times we agree upon and will endeavour to provide a safe environment within which we will confidentially explore issues and difficulties and move towards change. I will act as a facilitator in this process. With regard to my style of coaching, I will listen attentively and challenge you when I think it is appropriate. In undertaking this coaching agreement, you are committing yourself to seeing me regularly at the agreed time and ensuring the time we have together is optimised. Being honest, objective and committed to the coaching process is essential, to ensure you grow and develop within your role.

To be coachable, you must ensure that:-

- Your intent and desire for change are serious
- You are willing to take responsibility for your own goals and decisions
- You are ready to receive feedback
- You are willing to try new ways of working, be honest and inform me if things are not working for you
- You are willing to explore, challenge and change thoughts, feelings and actions that you recognise are self-defeating
- You allow me to try new concepts and different ways of doing things with you

Time

As a guide, coaching sessions usually last between one and two hours and may be held at 2-4 weekly intervals (or further apart depending on progress).

Getting results

To accelerate the process of our work together, it will help if you come to each session with as much clarity as possible about your agenda. Only agree to actions which you sincerely intend to carry out. Be honest with yourself and me about what is going on, both in the coaching session and outside it.

Between sessions, you may have a question, or want a sounding board or some feedback. I am happy to have occasional short telephone conversations or respond to emails, within reason. (Contact details below.)

Your feedback

As a coach, I will really value your considered and honest feedback about our sessions. This is vital if I am to be helpful to you and others. A sample feedback form is attached, so you know what to expect and what to look out for. I will email this to you after each session and would appreciate a quick return, whilst the session is fresh in your mind.
Confidentiality

The coaching service is absolutely confidential except in the following circumstances:

· If you give me information for the purpose of discussion with others
· If you give me reason to believe you may endanger yourself or others.

Records

Any written notes are kept securely and are confidential.

Ethics

As coach, I voluntarily commit to adopting the code of ethics and good practice set out by the International Coaching Federation. (Please see attached).

Coachee ________________________________________________
Coach  ________________________________________________
Date   ________________________________________________

Coach’s contact details:
Sample coaching questions for use in a PDP setting

The purpose of using coaching questions is to move the PDP discussion to a developmental one, rather than a transactional skills assessment and training needs analysis. The elected member can be engaged by focusing on real situations, positive strengths and skills, rather than identifying skills and attributes which are lacking. This can help build commitment for change and a greater willingness to take responsibility for their own learning and development. These are a sample set of questions intended to illustrate the potential of using coaching approaches during member PDP discussions.

- What has been going well?
- What did you do to make that happen?
- Could you do more of that?
- How could you try that in another case?
- When do you feel most confident?
- Can you describe that feeling?
- When do you wish you could feel that confident?
- What’s stopping you?
- What do most want to achieve in this role?
- How will you know when you’ve done that?
- Which are your strengths that can help you?
- (Miracle Skills Question:) If magic were possible, what three skills would you suddenly like to have?
- Where else can you draw help or inspiration from?
- Who have you observed doing this effectively?
- What is it that they do differently?
- Can you emulate that?
- If not, what’s stopping you?
- How are you feeling now/about that?
- How would you prefer to feel?
- What beliefs do you have about this situation which are making you feel this way?
- Are those beliefs rational, logical or helpful?
- What might be a different but realistic way to look at this?
- What are the rules of this game?
- What do you want to have happen?
- How much energy do you have for this issue on a scale of 1-10?
- How committed are you to tackling this on a scale of 1-10?
- What will you do to tackle this issue?
Appendix 6

A shared coaching resource to support members

Incentives for establishing a pool of coaches who can work across and between organisations:

- It can overcome other boundary issues between the member and officer who work in the same organisation
- It can help the member to feel more secure about confidentiality
- The external coach will not have pre-conceptions about personalities or situations which the member describes
- It is possible to ensure some standards and consistency in the coaching approach
- Coaches can be trained and supervised together (economies of scale and continuous learning opportunities)
- It is possible to collect basic monitoring and evaluation data if coaches use consistent forms of reporting
- It can be far cheaper than sourcing external coaches from the private sector
- Coaches may feel ‘freer’, and potentially more able to constructively challenge members from a different organisation
- It can be cheaper and less contentious than using private sector coaches.

Issues for consideration:

- Councils partnering to provide member coaching services will need to agree and set a minimum standard of training and competency in order to quality assure the service
- Agree arrangements for paying coaches’ travel expenses and / or their time (or offering an exchange of time between organisations)
- Managing a shared resource needs ongoing commitment to:
  - market the service
  - collect relevant evaluation and monitoring data (which helps to make the business case for ongoing provision and to encourage participation)
  - supervise coaches
  - refresh the pool of coaches as people move on
References


Silvester, Prof. J./ Menges, Dr. C. (2011) Political Mentoring Toolkit, City University London [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.city.ac.uk/interdisciplinary-city/centre-for-performance-at-work/research/publications/political-mentoring-toolkit


