

## **AGM 2019 Resolutions: Workload Implications of Mandatory CPD Courses**

### **Introduction**

In 2019 the following motion was passed at EIS AGM:

*"That this AGM resolve to instruct Council to investigate and issue advice on the workload implications of Local Authority 'mandatory' CPD courses for ASN practitioners in all sectors."*

The actions associated with this resolution were as follows:

- Conduct relevant analysis of the VEVT survey and create a briefing paper to inform thinking
- Investigate 'mandatory' element of said courses by consulting:
  - ASN Network
  - Motion proposer
  - LRs & LA Secs
- Draft advice for consideration by Education Committee.

This paper is a summary of the findings from consultation with relevant members on "*Local Authority 'mandatory' CPD courses for ASN practitioners*", exploring especially what 'mandatory' means in this context and the impact this has on ASN practitioners.

### **What 'CPD courses for ASN practitioners' are 'mandatory'?**

Consultation with members indicates that professional learning on ASN topics is typically linked to models and policies being rolled-out by the Local Authority. CPD of this kind is made 'mandatory' for ASN practitioners in a number of distinct ways.

In some cases, mandatory CPD on ASN topics is delivered to all teachers employed by a Local Authority as a key method of implementing a support model. For example, City of Edinburgh Council deliver mandatory training on the SCERTS Model for Autism to all teachers on a 3-year rolling basis, typically on a whole-school basis as part of CAT or INSET programmes, in much the same way as child protection training. City of Edinburgh Council similarly requires all staff new to the Local Authority to undertake a compulsory 'inclusive practice' session, and there are ongoing discussions about whether this will be mandatory for all staff going forward. In these cases, specific packages of ASN-related professional learning is mandatory for ASN practitioners on the same basis that it is mandatory for *all* teachers.

For other roll-outs Local Authorities may require schools to engage in centrally organised CPD by sending a key staff member to undertake the training and then lead on implementation in their school. In some cases, Local Authorities will

specify that ASN practitioners are the expected key staff members. One such example is South Lanarkshire Council's roll-out of a new model for ASD referrals, where the Local Authority requires ASN specialists to attend on behalf of their base schools or ASN unit. In examples given by members of this type of mandatory PL, the CPD for ASN practitioners was typically conceived by Local Authorities as one component of a policy roll-out alongside distribution of resources to schools to support implementation (the effectiveness of this is discussed below). In these cases, Local Authorities appear to have taken the decision that implementation of their approach to ASN support will be delivered via ASN specialists, and on that basis have described the specific CPD course as 'mandatory for ASN practitioners' to both schools and ASN practitioners themselves.

A third type of 'mandatory' CPD courses for ASN practitioners is where an ASN practitioner is selected by their school to engage with professional learning which fulfils the requirements of a policy or model which the Local Authority has made mandatory for all schools. One example of this is South Lanarkshire Council's implementation of the Nurture Group Network, which required each school to have some members of staff undertake a specific professional learning course before 2015 in order for the school to be 'Nurture Group Recognised'. In examples given by members of this type, significant expectations were placed on the teacher undertaking CPD to subsequently lead rollout of the model in their school (discussed further below). In these cases, the Local Authority is not understood to have specifically required ASN practitioners to be the staff members engaging with relevant professional learning, but that Senior Leadership Teams within schools have regularly appointed ASN practitioners to undertake CPD to fulfil ASN-related obligations placed on the schools.

Other mandatory CPD for ASN practitioners includes where ASN practitioners are required directly by their local authority to attend professional learning events on in-service days. In some Local Authorities, ASN practitioners will be required to attend any activity, including professional learning, which is arranged for their base schools for in-service days. In other cases, members have described centrally organised CPD events for ASN specialists, such as the Dumfries and Galloway Inclusion Team, and in Argyll and Bute where ASN practitioners are contracted directly to the Local Authority.

Consultation with members and reps suggests that across this range of 'mandatory' CPD for ASN practitioners, few if any members have sought to test the level of mandate, for example, by taking out a grievance in relation to an obligation placed on them by a line manager. However, members have described how a combination of tacit assumptions about the role of ASN practitioners' learning and professional practice, following from a lack of professional dialogue about ASN practitioners' professional learning needs, has combined with an over-stretched and hierarchical system, to compel ASN practitioners to undertake 'mandatory' CPD which they do not feel able to question. This is

clearly not consistent with the letter or spirit of the National Model of Professional Learning or the Professional Learning Planning cycle as articulated by GTCS.

### **Workload implications of 'mandatory' CPD courses for ASN practitioners**

Members identified that 'mandatory' CPD courses in and of themselves can represent significant additional workload. The example of Nurture Group Network training in South Lanarkshire required both attendance of a training day and subsequently a 4000-word written submission (on relevant theory and reporting on progress toward implementation) in order to complete the course. A common complaint of members is that the allocation of ASN practitioners' time to 'mandatory' CPD consumes time which could otherwise be used for other relevant professional learning or engagement in collegiate activity.

Members also reported that many of the 'mandatory' CPD courses described above subsequently confer significant additional responsibilities onto ASN practitioners, which have a severe impact on workload. A notable example of this is, again, South Lanarkshire's rollout of the Nurture Group programme. Upon attending the relevant training day, participants were informed of various new activities their schools would have to undertake in order to ensure their school was 'Nurture Group Recognised'. These included setting up 'nurture room' spaces for Nurture Group activity, identifying pupils whose needs were appropriate for the programme and maintaining 'Boxall profile' diagnostic logs of pupils nominated to participate, all requiring significant additional activity. Members reported that responsibility for these additional activities often fell exclusively on the ASN practitioners who had completed the relevant course, thereby significantly increasing their workload.

Members noted that the above case represents assumptions on the part of the Local Authority about a whole-school approach being deliverable by an individually trained staff member. Members further noted that while an ASN specialist may be the staff member expected to understand and engage with ASN-related CPD, they typically were not well placed to "sell" the ethos, details and practical requirements of a new model to colleagues. This has resulted in ASN specialists undertaking significant additional workload to implement a new model themselves, possibly without much success. Such examples indicate that ASN specialists can find themselves caught between mandatory requirements placed on schools by the Local Authority, and the existing management and resourcing situation in their school as a result of undertaking 'mandatory' CPD, a role for which the CPD itself does not prepare them.

### **National Model of Professional Learning**

The National Model of Professional Learning outlines the key principles and features of effective professional development for teachers in Scotland. The model centres the teaching professional as a learner and educator within a community of practice, seeking out and undertaking learning opportunities which deepen their own knowledge and understanding. The model further emphasises learning by enquiry, and deriving personal learning objectives from reflection on one's own professional practice to ensure that all CPD supports professional growth and agency.

This is underpinned by a commitment to leadership of and for learning, requiring that educational leaders create conditions for professional learning based on trust, partnership and enquiring approaches to practice. As such the National Model asserts that the responsibility for high quality professional learning is to be shared between teachers at all levels, and based in dialogue about the individual and collective learning needs of the professionals and their community.

The purpose of the National Model of Professional Learning is to shape how teaching professionals engage with and are supported to pursue professional development, and is to be used alongside self-evaluation activities related to the GTCS Professional Standards to map out professional learning. Full details can be accessed here: [National Model of Professional Learning](#).

## **Conclusions**

- 'Mandatory' CPD courses for ASN specialists may not fulfil these conditions, and will reduce the amount of time available to ASN specialists to engage with self-directed and appropriate professional learning.
- ASN specialists may not be the most or only appropriate recipients of ASN-related CPD; therefore consideration should be given to the intended impact of the CPD opportunity, and a judgement made about the most appropriate individuals to seek to engage in the learning, strongly informed by discussion of individuals' professional learning needs, school improvement plans, and workload and Working Time Agreements.
- Where CPD is an aspect of rolling-out a Local Authority model for ASN-related activity, consideration should be given within LNCT discussions as to which staff are best placed to engage in the related learning such that it can be effectively implemented in schools, taking account of individual professional learning priorities and workload considerations.
- Further, schools should be properly resourced and supported to ensure effective implementation of any models of specific ASN provision. Local Authorities should provide guidance for managers on appropriately addressing any additional workload associated implications of

implementing new models wherever these obligations are conferred on schools, and where necessary, having been identified by LNCTs, the requisite resources to enable implementation.

### **Advice for members, Reps and Local Association Secretaries:**

The workload of all teachers, regardless of specialism and including ASN specialists, must be capable of being overtaken within the terms of the contractual 35-hour working week and the per annum 35-hour maximum CPD entitlement/obligation.

- The EIS is clear that PRD should be focused primarily on the learning needs of teachers, with reviewers trained to support individuals in identifying and meeting their professional learning needs. It is unacceptable for reviewers or line managers to seek to determine or dictate significant elements of a teacher's professional learning activity. Whilst there can often be mutual benefits from professional learning for the teacher and for the school, the emphasis should always be on fulfilling the professional learning needs as prioritised by the teacher, in the interests of ensuring relevance and effectiveness of PL.
- As for all teachers, CPD for ASN specialists should be in keeping with the spirit and letter of the National Model of Professional Learning and the Professional Learning Planning cycle as articulated by GTCS. Details can be accessed here: [National Model of Professional Learning](#) and the [Professional Learning Planning cycle](#).
- Should any member who is an ASN specialist consider that they are being put under undue pressure to undertake 'mandatory' CPD, they should seek advice in the first instance from the School Rep, or with the Local Association Secretary in the event that there is no EIS Rep within the school.

School Branches concerned about the delegation of 'mandatory' CPD to ASN specialists, should raise the matter in the first instance with the management of the school, seeking advice from the Local Association Secretary as necessary.