

## Education and Lifelong Learning

### Evaluation of Leading to Deliver

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The Scottish Government established the Leading to Deliver programme in 2003 in order to develop leadership and management skills for first-line and middle managers working in the social services sector in Scotland. The evaluation sought to inform decisions about the programme's future after five years of operation.

### Main Findings

- In general, participants were highly satisfied with the programme and would recommend it to others.
- Most participants and line managers agreed that Leading to Deliver was relevant to social work services and the Changing Lives agenda and in meeting programme objectives. Leading to Deliver is perceived to be very relevant to employers as they expect managers to lead change to improve performance and to deliver better services.
- The majority of participants agreed that attending the programme had benefited both their employer and their work, i.e. managing change more effectively, increased confidence, making them a more confident manager and understanding strategic management. However, line managers were generally less positive about the benefits gained. Both participants and line managers reported organisational barriers to use of learning in the workplace.
- Leading to Deliver is unusually positioned as a 'luxury' leadership training course, reflecting the level of funding it has received from the Scottish Government. In terms of cost, it is in the lower range of other largely residential based courses and a significantly lower cost than commercial courses. It can therefore be seen to offer reasonably good value considering it provides a high level qualification focusing on leadership in a social services context.
- The majority of line managers and participants believed that there was an on-going need for a programme of this nature, though had concerns about the ability of some organisations to contribute to costs if asked to.
- Recommendations for the future of the programme included offering both local/regional delivery and a distance learning option, retaining and strengthening valued features such as facilitation, accreditation of qualification, opportunity to network in syndicate groups, and the workplace change project.

# Background

## The Course

Leading to Deliver was established in 2003 in response to research which identified a need for better leadership and management in the social services sector.

The programme is fully funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by The Taylor Clarke Partnership (TCP) in partnership with The Robert Gordon University (RGU) in Aberdeen who provides postgraduate level academic accreditation and guidance.

Around 100 social service sector participants each year have participated in the course, which has evolved over the years to now include four quarterly residential 3 day facilitated workshops at a national centre, an e-learning facility, mentoring, a workplace project for attendees, and engagement events for line managers of attendees.

## Changing Lives

Between 2004 and 2006, during the lifespan of Leading to Deliver, a major review of social services was undertaken – the 21st Century Review of Social Work. The review led to the development of the Changing Lives 5 year change programme for social work services in Scotland. Leading to Deliver has been adapted to incorporate this new programme.

## Objectives of Leading to Deliver

The objectives of Leading to Deliver as it currently stands are:

- to produce leaders who understand the Changing Lives agenda and are able to play a leadership role within it;
- to equip participants as adaptive leaders, able both to act as role models and lead change;
- to produce sustainable benefits from the knowledge, skills and understanding of the participants beyond the end of the programme.

## Research Aims & Objectives

The main aim of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which Leading to Deliver was meeting its objectives and to assess the extent to which this approach to leadership development was resulting in real impacts in terms of the implementation of Changing Lives. Three broad aims for the evaluation were:

- to identify factors that will sustain learning from the programme in the longer term;
- to identify recommendations for the future development and delivery of the programme in terms of structure, content, funding options, application and selection criteria/processes and support for participants;
- to identify ways in which both impact and reach of the programme can be improved;
- to assess the value for money of the programme and the implications for future funding options.

## Methodology

This comprised of the following main elements:

- An online quantitative survey with 43 line managers and 196 participants across the five cohorts;
- a combination of face-to-face and telephone depth qualitative interviews with 38 line managers, 38 participants, and representatives of 25 different stakeholder groups;
- a review of relevant literature and telephone interviews with key providers of alternative leadership and management programmes in the UK.

## Findings

### Perception of Leading to Deliver

Participants were highly satisfied with the programme and would recommend it to others. They perceived it could bring benefits in their development as better leaders, career progression, knowledge of change management, ability to address specific challenges at work, and increased confidence.

The majority were satisfied with course design, in terms of level at which the training was pitched at, and balance between the different modes of study. Participants reported difficulties in managing the volume and speed of information delivered, and finding time to undertake the course against work commitments, but thought this acceptable.

Participants were highly satisfied with the different aspects of the residential element of the programme, but least satisfied with the quality of accommodation, and use of evenings. Most were satisfied with the facilitator support provided, though there were mixed opinions on the lead facilitator's style of delivery, although the majority did rate it highly overall.

Syndicate groups were seen as providing a great support mechanism. Participants reported shared practice and networking benefits from having a wide range of participants from the local authority and voluntary sectors.

Participants rated all four course modules highly. However, satisfaction was lower for Module 3, Change in Service Delivery, due to pace, and business focussed content which ran contrary to traditional social services sector culture.

There were mixed views on the e-learning aspect of the programme, which was not being used as effectively as intended. In the main, this was due to many of the user group not being sufficiently computer literate to use this learning resource. The mentoring system was viewed as useful, though participants found the onus of engaging suitable mentors a barrier.

The gaining of an accredited qualification was seen as an important benefit from undertaking the course.

Participants reported wide variation in levels of support from line managers, though this was generally better where line managers had previously attended the course. All line managers who attended the 2007/8 line manager introductory workshop (intended to improve line manager commitment) found it useful, though less than half attended.

## Impact & Reach of Leading to Deliver

The majority of participants agreed that attending the programme has benefited both their employer and their work.

**Impacts on participants** included improvements to self awareness, confidence, understanding of strategic management, ability to change more effectively, and learning a range of leadership styles. Participants reported gaining 'practical tools' and were using course materials for reference. **Impacts on staff** included more effective delegation, and earning of their respect and trust. **Impacts on service users** were less well evidenced, mainly in improved engagement in initiatives, though most participants expected more tangible sustainable benefits to service users in the longer term.

Line managers were generally less positive about the benefits gained. Though most reported improvement in their employees' working behaviour, and sharing of learning, for some, skills were not being used as much as expected.

Both participants and line managers reported organisational barriers to use of learning in the workplace, which could lead to frustration among some staff.

## Degree to which Leading to Deliver meets its Objectives

The majority of participants, but slightly fewer line managers, agreed Leading to Deliver was relevant to social work services. The course was perceived to be very relevant to social services' employers as they expected their managers to lead change, to improve performance and to deliver better services. Most participants and line managers also thought the programme was relevant to the 'Changing Lives' agenda, though some felt the agenda lacked clarity.

## Programme's Sustainability

Leading to Deliver is unusually positioned as a 'luxury' leadership training course, reflecting the level of funding it has received from the Scottish Government. It offers reasonably good value compared to other similar courses considering it provides a high level qualification focusing on leadership in a social services context.

The majority of line managers and participants who expressed a view on Leading to Deliver versus other similar programmes thought it compared favourably with others they had either attended or were aware of. The majority of line managers and participants believed that there was an on-going need for a programme of this nature, though had concerns about the ability of some organisations to contribute to costs, if asked to.

When presented with alternative design options for consideration for increasing the impact and reach of Leading to Deliver in the future, both participants and line managers clearly favoured a programme which re-organised the location of face-to-face components to regional or local centres such as a local college.

Most valued elements for retention included the facilitators, the accredited qualification, and the use of syndicate groups as a support mechanism.

Fundamental shifts in design may have a detrimental effect, as it will be difficult to develop a programme which suits the learning styles of the diverse participants.

## Recommendations

Recommendations for the future of the programme are directly supported by the views of research consultees, in the context of the programme management's desire for improving the impact and reach of Leading to Deliver.

Recommendations include:

- offering both local/regional delivery, and a distance learning option building a portfolio of modules;

- retaining the current content of modules, but reviewing volume and timing of delivery to alleviate pressure on participants;
- improving the screening process for choosing workplace change projects to ensure relevance;
- retaining the accredited qualification;
- maintaining the current quality of facilitation, engaging current facilitators to train others should greater numbers be required;
- retaining opportunity to network, in syndicate groups, possibly through a national event or conference at the beginning of the programme;
- re-evaluating the programme after the first year of change, to establish whether there has been any impact on the position and image of the brand;
- embedding participation targets in the programme objectives.

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The report, "Evaluation of Leading to Deliver", which is summarised in this research findings is a web only document and is available on the publications pages of the Scottish Government website at

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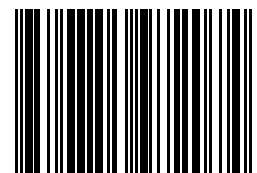
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**Social Science in Government**

ISBN 978-0-7559-7207-4



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