knowledge about learning organisations

Leadership (a)

Like most interventions aimed at securing significant organisational improvement, organisational learning depends heavily on effective leadership. Leaders model the openness, risk-taking and reflection necessary for learning, and communicate a compelling vision of the learning organisation, providing empathy, support and personal advocacy needed to lead others towards it. They ensure that organisations and work groups have the capacity to learn, change and develop.

Organisational capacity to be a learning organisation – questions

- Does the organisation's budget contain funds for continuous professional development, training and change? Does this include a budget for training service users and carers, and is it validated?
- Are there systems for reviewing the effectiveness of policy change and associated training?
- Are service users and carers supported and financed so that they can be directly involved in training and in policy development?
- Do teams allocate time for development, and do workload systems, as well as job descriptions, give recognition to development work? Development needs to be built into capacity at all levels in the organisation.

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Illustrative examples

- For one local authority, each year, a plan for development and training is devised from workforce and strategic analysis. This plan summarises the development needs of each service area and includes targets and budgets for achieving qualifications, for developing skills to meet new job requirements, for implementing changes, and for maintaining professional recognition.
- A group of Learning Disability service users have been trained as trainers and are paid a fee to lead consultation exercises, facilitate service development sessions, and contribute to training programmes.
- In each service area a cross-section of staff form 'Training and Development Groups' who meet regularly to plan, review and evaluate training and development activities. This has led, for example, to an audit of the training take-up by Approved Social Workers which identified and resolved many problems associated with training delivery and access.

Useful reference

- Newton, C. and Marsh, P. (1993) 'Training in partnership', York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Website

www.topss.org.uk/pdf/man_guide_strat_nos.pdf
Downloadable from the Topss website: 'A Manager's Guide to developing strategic uses of National Occupational Standards'.

Use the information and questions on the cards to think about a place of work as a learning organisation.