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knowledge about learning organisations

Organisational culture (b)

Learning organisations have strong cultures that promote openness, creativity, and experimentation among members. They encourage members to acquire, process and share information, nurture innovation and provide the freedom to try new things, to risk failure and to learn from mistakes.

Development of new ideas and methods – questions

- Who is responsible for this? Is it, and should it be, one delegated and named person in the organisation, or should it be owned by everybody, including administrative and finance staff?
- Is development specifically included in the job descriptions, where appropriate?
- Is development written into the capacity at individual, team, and organisational level?
- What are the barriers to new ideas?
- How are changes planned, managed and reviewed? How is innovative practice spread throughout the organisation?
- Is leadership effective for the purpose of the organisation and its stage of development? Are all staff involved in the process of leadership or is it only for senior managers?

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Illustrative examples
- One large voluntary organisation has three dedicated posts for practice development. The people in these posts are responsible for gathering and disseminating new ideas.
- At a time when there is a plethora of new initiatives, with accompanying funding, that demand creative and alternative ways of working, and inter-agency co-operation and collaboration, it is important to be clear about who should take things forward, who to involve and how the process should be managed.
- One local authority has created a part-time specialist post in order to focus on effective ways of delivering Family Support services in conjunction with other agencies and in the context of these new initiatives.
- Newsletters, the Intranet, etc. are a good way of spreading innovative practice within organisations and these were methods used by several of our test sites.
- The SCIE Electronic Library is a good place to learn about research and practice: www.scie.org.uk

Useful references
- Iles, V. and Sutherland, K. (2001) 'Managing change in the NHS', London: NHS Service Delivery and Organisation Research and Development.
- Barratt, M. and Cooke, J. (2001) *Evidence-based practice*, Totnes: Dartington Hall Trust.

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