In *What are we learning about LEA involvement in school networks?* we illustrate some of the important roles LEAs can play in brokering a network-based system. In particular, this involves supporting school networks and connecting networks of schools through fostering lateral knowledge transfer and leadership opportunities.

The 'What are we learning about…?' series is designed to make public the learning that has emerged from NLCs in the last two years.

This first title in the series will feature *What are we learning about…?*

- LEA involvement in school networks
- Establishing a network of schools
- Impact of school networks
- Professional development within school networks
- Leadership within school networks
- Sustaining a network of schools

To order a copy of this publication, please email nlc@ncsl.org.uk quoting the reference WAWLA/From networks to a networked system

The LEArning Project and LEArning Forum

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From networks of schools to a networked system

The LEArning Project and LEArning Forum

www.ncsl.org.uk
What are we learning about LEA involvement in school networks?

It is important to be clear that supporting networking and collaboration is not just another function of the LEA, it is a necessary part of its work, underpinned by a fundamental belief that the relationships between those who work in LEAs are crucial to the effective delivery of services. It is to these relationships that it is the practice of NLCs that LEAs will be able to model collaborative behaviours by networking services and with their communities.

What is clear from the work of NLCs, is that LEA involvement in school networks is culturally similar to how they need to work to make new Children’s Services operate effectively. The LEA works with networks of schools, including education, collaborate to meet children’s needs.

Schools are able to model collaboration, and learn between tiers of the system. The move to a more collaborative and network-based system offers a real opportunity for LEAs to learn about network-based and collaborative approaches, and local learning projects are being developed to support them. LEA personnel and actively supported by the Chief Education Officer.

The LEArning Project has three key objectives:

1. Helping local authorities to develop their capacity for facilitating and supporting networks of schools and children’s services partnerships.
2. Re-learning and sharing knowledge across LEAs about network-based and collaborative approaches, and local learning projects are being developed to support them.
3. Developing new models of practice with local authorities which will influence and shape policy.

Policy and system learning:

The LEArning Project is seeking to answer:

- What are the most effective network-based and collaborative configurations?
- What are the most effective forms of leadership and facilitation for networks?
- What can collaborative capacity, local and hierarchical, look like?
- How can collaborative capacity support the local implementation of Every Child Matters?

The think tank sessions provide a forum for considering these policy and system level questions:

- What can collaborative capacity look like?
- What are the policy implications for the generation of effective collaboration?
- What is the contribution of collaborative working to the effective evaluation of the government’s Every Child Matters strategy?
- How can collaborative capacity contribute to more sustainable and effective implementation of Every Child Matters?

Further information:

If you would like share your views about the work of the LEArning Project, or would like your own learning to be shared, please email learningforum@ncsl.org.uk or visit www.ncsl.org.uk.

The LEArning Forum:

The LEArning Forum is an informal network of LEAs who engage and network to share experiences of supporting the implementation of Every Child Matters. It is a communication forum designed to connect together those LEAs who are advancing in or about whom a responsibility for, network-based practice in LEAs. LEA members have met together face to face and online, to learn more about how LEAs are currently working in support of networks of schools. The LEArning Project has three key objectives:

- Helping local authorities to develop their capacity for facilitating and supporting networks of schools and children’s services partnerships.
- Re-learning and sharing knowledge across LEAs about network-based and collaborative approaches, and local learning projects are being developed to support them.
- Developing new models of practice with local authorities which will influence and shape policy.

What are the most effective forms of leadership and facilitation for networks?

The LEArning Project is an internet-based and voluntary organisation, and an online community was established. It is also a monthly newsletter and a website, providing continuous opportunities for sharing knowledge and collaborative learning. The LEArning Project has three key objectives:

1. Helping local authorities to develop their capacity for facilitating and supporting networks of schools and children’s services partnerships.
2. Re-learning and sharing knowledge across LEAs about network-based and collaborative approaches, and local learning projects are being developed to support them.
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