

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Formal Advice to the Secretary of State

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Securing the necessary numbers and quality of school leaders to sustain the success of England's schools in the future is an urgent and significant challenge.
- 1.2 Some headteacher vacancies are becoming increasingly hard to fill and there are considerable strains on the present recruitment and supply system.
- 1.3 Succession planning is essentially a demographic challenge. However, other factors compound this. In particular there are often negative perceptions of the work and role of school leaders – especially regarding accountabilities and workload. In addition there is a need to:
 - Develop talented leaders earlier and in greater numbers
 - Deploy leaders into areas of acute challenge and
 - Mobilise local systems to develop solutions to local challenges
- 1.4 Given the high levels of devolution in the current school system, neither central government, nor individual schools can address the challenge satisfactorily. There must be a strategic response which involves all levels of the system.
- 1.5 Both immediate action and longer-term changes are required as part of this response.
- 1.6 At the core of our proposals, our strategy will create local solutions for a national challenge. With the government's support, the challenge offers the opportunity for headteachers collectively, Local Authorities, trusts as they emerge and other regional groups, to develop more dynamic partnerships and systems based on up-to-date data and good communications. A small group of specialist advisers will be needed to support this process.
- 1.7 Early actions are necessary to address the areas of acute shortage. However, the challenge is a ten-year one and longer-term investment will be required to sustain benefits. We provide detailed proposals that cover the first three years.
- 1.8 A limited number of strategies used in combination will be field tested immediately in areas with the most acute challenge. This will inform a rapid extension of the proposals in the second and third year.
- 1.9 If the system, with the government's support, acts swiftly and consistently, long-term stability can be secured.
- 1.10 Whilst rising to the challenge requires national, local and school-level contributions, national leadership will be required. NCSL recognises that it has a pivotal role to play.

2. Introduction

2.1.1 In the current NCSL remit (December 05), the Secretary of State said:

“Succession planning

A significant number of headteachers will reach sixty within the next eight years. I should therefore like the College to consider how more people can be encouraged and developed to take on school leadership roles. I look to the College to provide me with advice, by May 2006, on how succession planning can be addressed, and to work with the governor associations, and other key partners, including local authorities, to develop advice to chairs of governors on recruitment, selection and succession planning.”

2.1.2 We welcome the opportunity to provide this advice and believe that we can make a substantial and distinctive contribution. We welcome too the fact that the Secretary of State has asked for advice on the problem in time for it to be addressed and action to be taken. The demographic challenge facing the profession, coupled with some highly publicised difficulties in attracting and retaining senior school leaders, would, without intervention, lead to an acute shortage of suitable candidates and leaders within the next two to three years. In some specific areas and schools the challenge of filling vacancies is immediate.

2.2 In preparing this advice we have worked closely with an advisory group of key stakeholders to draw on the best available expertise (see Appendix) and have commissioned consultancy from McKinsey, and the think tank Demos, to undertake a thorough analysis of data and generate options for a strategic response. We have sought evidence from other sectors, organisations and education systems; explored stakeholder views through individual interviews and focus groups; and engaged those stakeholders in the development and appraisal of preferred responses.

2.3 We are confident, therefore, that this advice is characterised by:

- A robust evidence base
- Thorough analysis
- Generation of options which are sensitive to the scale and complexity of the challenge
- Widespread support for both the analysis of the issues and the preferred responses.

2.4 If the actions set out below in our recommendations are taken, we believe the problem is solvable. Not only that, the challenge becomes an opportunity to bring on a new generation of school leaders who are in-tune with the needs of 21st century schools. The wider reform programme can thus deliver the continuous improvement in pupil performance that the nation’s future and indeed equity, demand.

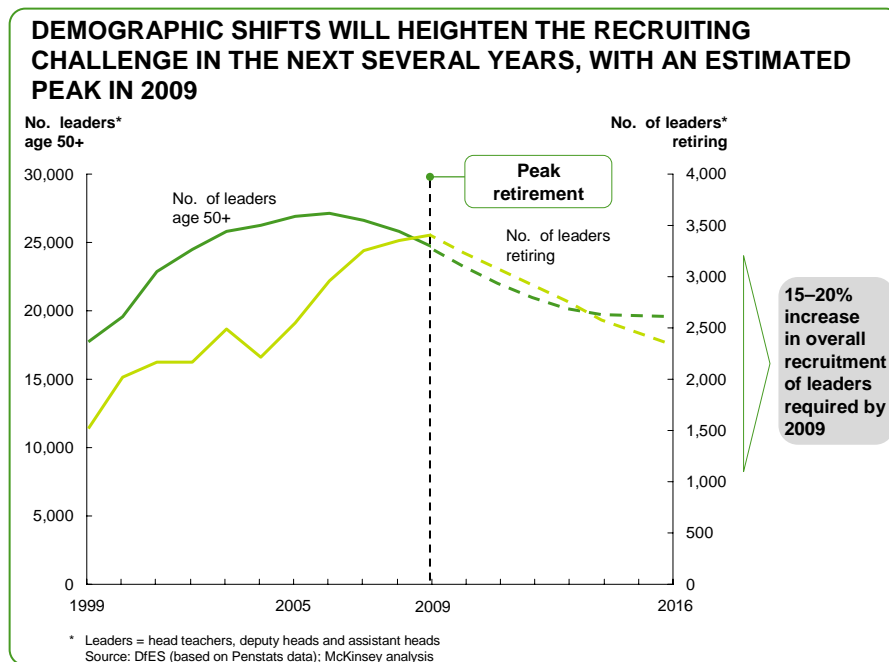
3. The Nature of the Challenge

The challenge of succession is multi-faceted; it relates to supply, perceptions, development, deployment and a strategic system-wide response.

3.1 Supply

3.1.1 According to our forecasts, over the next three years we face an increasing challenge in school leader recruitment

- The numbers of school leader retirements is likely to rise from 2,250 in 2004 to a peak of nearly 3500 in 2009
- This will fall back to around 2500 in 2016
- Over recent years only about a third of retirements have been at normal retirement age (60) or above, and a growing number have been early retirements after age 55.
- We estimate from initial analysis that retirement pressures will require an increase, on 2004 figures, of 15-20 percent in the recruitment of school leaders by 2009.



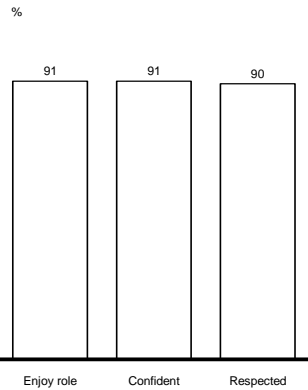
3.1.2 In our view, there is a compelling case for taking urgent action to address the challenge of leadership succession. The projected shortfall in numbers coming forward for school leadership posts and headship cannot be absorbed by the system and certain areas will present acute problems in the next two to three years, if not addressed.

3.2 Perceptions

3.2.1 Demographics alone, whilst it might be the most significant factor, is not the only one in the succession challenge. Recent opinion surveys have found that while heads are overwhelmingly positive about their role, they now face an unprecedented mix of very high levels of devolved responsibility, sharp accountability structures, and radical changes in the way schools interact with other services. Whilst many school leaders regard these changes positively, there is no question that they heighten the complexity and demands of the role. Likewise, although the majority of deputies express a desire to move to headship, 43% do not wish to progress. Most worryingly, 70% of middle leaders say they do not aspire to headship. Reasons cited include accountability pressures and other work stresses, as well as perceived reduction in pupil contact, amongst other factors. In other words, the perceptions are based on only part of the experience of current leaders, and they fail to recognise the positive rewards of the role which are reported by school leaders.

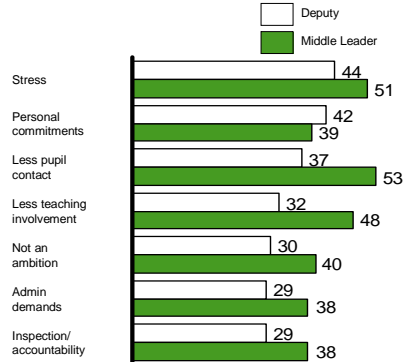
PROPOSALS MUST ADDRESS PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES OF THE ROLE

Head teachers are overwhelmingly positive about their role...



... but prospective leaders often carry negative perceptions . . .

Top 7 reasons for not wanting to be head, %



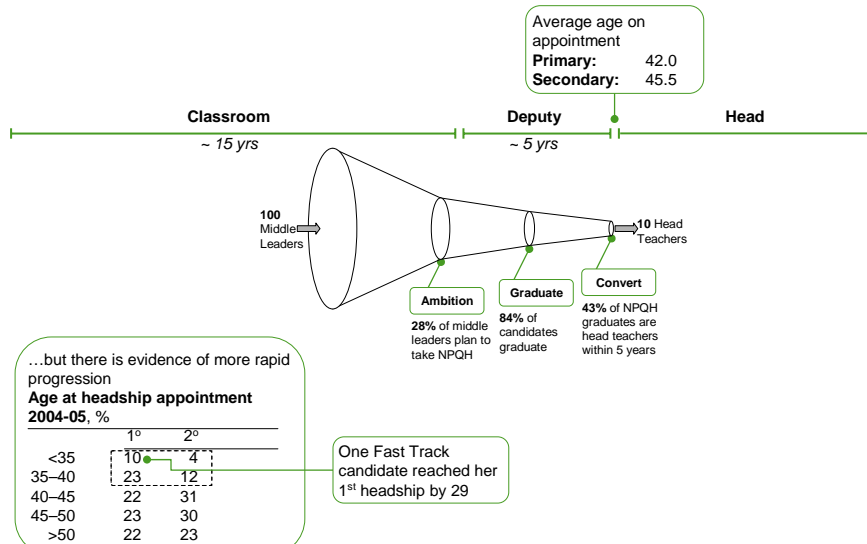
Source: MORI: Teacher Workload Survey; RBA: stakeholder interviews

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3.3 Development

3.3.1 Overall, we see a need to ensure that talented potential leaders are developed earlier and more consistently and promoted more rapidly. Women and BME candidates are presently under represented at headship. Currently, it takes an average of 20 years to reach headship, with only 10% of middle leaders becoming heads. There are already examples of more rapid progression, with schemes such as FastTrack. Accelerated progression for more candidates will be needed in future and developments such as FastTrack need to be systematically built upon.

THE PATHWAY TO HEADSHIP IS LONG AND CHALLENGING



Source: MORI "State of School Leadership" Survey Results (RR633); Howson; NCSL research (not in public domain)

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3.4 Deployment

- 3.4.1 The combined pressures of demographics and perceptions are already beginning to bite and some areas will be more severely affected than others. Headteacher vacancies overall remain at less than 1%, but are around 5% in some areas. National re-advertisement rates are now over 30% for both primary and secondary headteachers, as compared to less than 20% ten years ago, with levels of over 50% in Inner London and in the Catholic sector.
- 3.4.2 The cost of re-advertising headteacher posts has risen from £537K in 1999 to almost £1m in 2005, and shows no sign of abating. The school system as presently configured is straining to resolve the recruitment and supply issues.

4. A strategic response

- 4.1.1 If the succession challenge is not addressed in a strategic fashion, the substantial investment being made in infrastructure and reform will not bring the benefits in student achievement that we might otherwise anticipate. One option could be to re-configure the school system to ensure greater central control over headteacher and senior leader appointments than at present. However, this would undermine the principles of our highly devolved system and self-managing schools. The strategic response, therefore, needs a range of actions that rely on influence rather than controlling levers. It requires committed action at national, regional and local level, with the implication of much higher levels of collaboration across the educational system.
- 4.1.2 The specific actions we propose take account of:
- The complexity of the challenge, which requires a multi-faceted response
 - The context of the education system, with high levels of devolution and multiple forms of organisation at local level
 - Variations in the scale and nature of the challenge in different areas in the country
 - Short-term responses and longer-term initiatives
 - The need to address not just numbers and supply, but quality, development and deployment
 - The important contribution to be made by existing heads in proactively identifying and nurturing future leaders.
- 4.1.3 Our recommendations offer a coherent and cost-effective approach which build on the current strengths of the system, and ensure a response which is owned and enacted at the appropriate system level.
- 4.2 To deliver this approach, all levels of the education system need to be actively involved. In particular the 'middle tier' of local authorities and other regional/local groups of schools, such as any trusts that might emerge, have a pivotal role. We see an important role for national coordination and leadership to ensure the highest levels of local engagement regionally and locally, but the focus of much activity within the strategy needs to be at this middle tier level. Rather than designing separate or new institutions, we recommend that, wherever possible, we work through existing and emerging structures and in alignment with existing programmes.

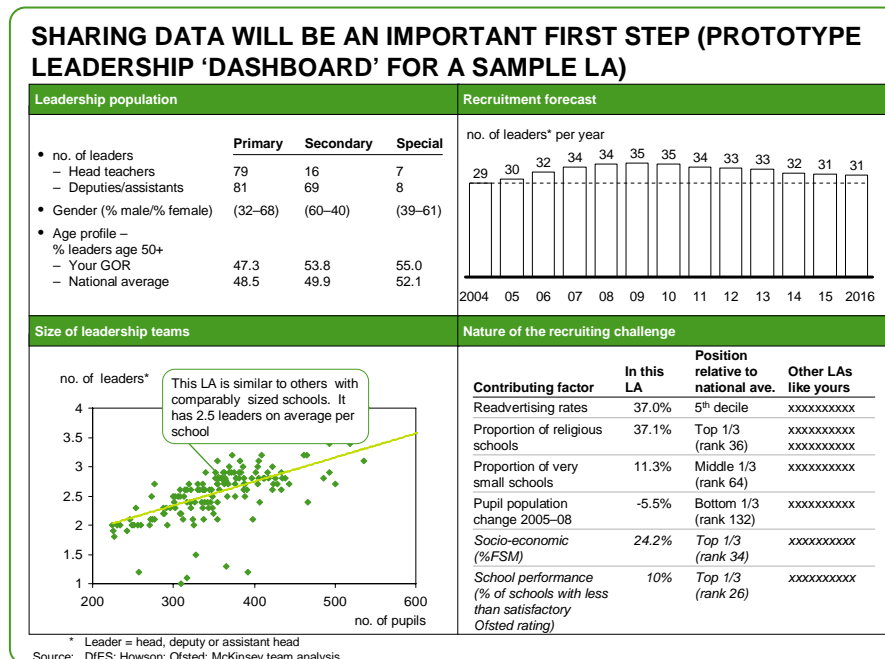
4.3 There are lessons to learn from other initiatives. The TDA, for example has transformed the recruitment and training of teachers over the past five years. School leadership succession, where there is no direct influence on supply and demand, offers a different challenge, but we would seek to build on lessons around advertising, use of data, effective marketing, use of variable incentives and so on.

4.4 In order to engage all levels of the system, we propose a limited number of approaches, used in combination, with an immediate start on the most acute areas. At the same time, we recommend field-testing with a range of local groups in year one, then rapidly extending thereafter. Provisional costings for local approaches have taken this piloting work into account.

5. Developing local solutions

5.1.1 While we believe strongly that each head teacher should take responsibility for developing the next generation of school leaders, we recognise that the challenge of succession planning cannot be managed by individual schools working alone. Therefore, at the core of our proposals, our strategy will create local solutions for a national challenge.

- NCSL would aim to provide accessible local level data which offers information about leadership populations and the nature of the succession challenge, as well as benchmarking information comparing each LA to like LAs
- Specialist advice from a small team established by the National College will provide not just an analysis of the succession challenge at local level, but also galvanise local responses, including locally-set targets and the drawing up of a local succession planning strategy. The dashboard below illustrates the kind of tool we would propose for this local dialogue



- NCSL will consult with the Directors of Children's Services (DCS), the National Strategies senior regional directors and the regional Children's Services Advisers (CSA's) to agree how to secure appropriate sub regional partnerships with the requisite expertise to develop succession planning strategies which are likely to be based on LA boundaries, but may allow for other groupings as appropriate
- LAs will have a pivotal role
- So, too, will other local groups, such as diocesan bodies
- We recommend that each school works within either an existing collaborative group or, where necessary, joins a collaborative group, for succession planning purposes. Trusts as they emerge will be a good vehicle for this process.

5.1.2 Within these strategies, the following additional elements will play a part and NCSL would take a leading role in their design and development:

- Career planning and mentoring
- Local talent-spotting and encouragement
- Enhanced career development opportunities for senior leaders and heads, including use of opportunities for school leaders to take on roles beyond their own school on a part-time or temporary basis. Such activity could both provide "acting up" opportunities and strengthen retention of leaders who might otherwise retire early.

5.2 Address hard to fill areas

5.2.1 The local-level data reveals that some areas and types of school are going to be more acutely affected by the succession and recruitment challenge than others.

5.2.2 It seems likely that the raft of measures outlined in this advice will not be sufficient to carry such areas and types of school through the periods of most acute shortage.

- We would recommend, therefore, that urgent consideration is given to other incentives, financial or other, which schools or groups of schools might deploy in such areas
- We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with DfES officials what these might be and how we might build on the experience of for example, dealing with teacher shortage and securing good leadership for schools in special measures
- Along with DfES, NCSL would need to monitor the situation on the ground routinely and be prepared to respond rapidly when necessary.

6. National priorities

A number of responses will be coordinated at a national level:

6.1.1 Headteacher recruitment and appointment guidance for chairs of governors

6.1.2 Our commissioned study into headteacher appointments, currently nearing completion, has pointed to significant variation in practice and the quality of the process in recruiting and appointing heads. It has also uncovered a widespread concern about the decline in numbers of candidates for headship.

- We are producing guidance and advice on recruitment, appointment and succession by October 06 as requested by Secretary of State in our remit letter

- We are working with DfES, NCOGs and others to secure ways of reaching governors most effectively
- We believe that greater consistency and professionalism in the appointment process for school leaders is necessary and, as we take this work forward, DfES should consider ways of achieving that.

6.1.3 An early communications campaign

6.1.4 This should be targeted at changing perceptions of school leaders' and headteachers' roles and encouraging engagement with the issue of succession and with other initiatives we undertake to develop future leaders.

- We see it as essential that key stakeholders, particularly professional associations, are involved in developing the campaign and would seek their involvement in it
- An early part of this work should be the development of a better understanding and a more comprehensive picture of the nature of the school leadership labour market
- We would undertake early targeting of existing NPQH graduates to improve the current "conversion" rate
- We suggest that approaches are field-tested wherever possible and, in the light of hard evidence decide how and whether to scale up
- In addition, we need to make sure that the campaign is "a call to action" offering those who respond practical ways to follow-up and find out about opportunities for leadership development.

6.2 A longer-term diversity drive

6.2.1 We see the need for targeted campaigns to increase the numbers of women and black and minority ethnic senior leaders and headteachers as a key priority. The data on the gender of senior leaders and headteachers suggests that increasing the number of female heads to reflect the proportions of females currently at deputy level, would generate a further 330 potential heads per year.

- We recommend that, as reliable data on the ethnic mix of heads and senior leaders is not currently available, workforce data gathering is amended to secure this information as soon as possible
- We intend to establish a working group with key partners, including TDA, to learn from initiatives they are implementing to achieve targets in the wider school workforce, to set out a strategy for increasing diversity, including targets and proposals for specific initiatives
- NCSL will also provide personalised opportunities for leadership development for both female and BME candidates through our new Leadership Pathways provision.

6.3 Remodelling leadership

6.3.1 We are working closely with the STRB-commissioned Independent Review into School Leadership. Our work on succession planning would make a significant contribution to that review.

6.3.2 Following the Independent Review, NCSL will ensure that it builds on the outcomes of the review.

7. Existing initiatives with further potential:

- 7.1.1 Much of NCSL's current work will have an important contribution to make. In particular:
- The Fast Track scheme, which passes to NCSL in September, has an important role to play in accelerating career progression. DfES will wish to consider whether this programme needs to be expanded
 - The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), is undergoing a major review. This will make a significant contribution to career planning and succession and career mentoring opportunities
 - We see existing NPQH graduates as a key target for conversion to headship
 - The pilot programme, Future Leaders, designed to provide an accelerated and alternative route to urban leadership, will be undertaken and reviewed 2006 – 8
 - The Trainee Heads scheme is being piloted at primary, as well as secondary level, and will be reviewed.
- 7.1.2 Given the age gap in the demographic profile, we see that accelerated progress for some teachers will be an essential element of a succession strategy and the above initiatives provide a major opportunity.
- 7.1.3 There are also other initiatives, at both national and local level, where benefits are beginning to be realised. These include a national focus on coaching and mentoring (GTC, NCSL, TDA); the Teacher Learning Academy (GTC); and specific LA strategies to widen and deepen the pool of local leaders (eg Rochdale's continuing professional development programme for primary senior leaders).

8. School and individual level

- 8.1.1 The proposals above are designed to create a new climate in which schools take more responsibility for leadership development as well as succession planning and current school leaders, as well as specialist consultants, local officers, NCSL and other agencies will all have a role to play.
- We would aim to identify or develop a substantial number of schools/groups of school/trusts who are actively managing their own talent, especially in recruitment hot spots. Over time NCSL will play a part in recognising local successes and good practice – accrediting groups of schools
 - NCSL will consult widely on succession and seek to engage the profession through its series of nine regional conferences in Autumn 2006.

9. Potential impact, implementation challenge and cost

- 9.1.1 For each of the responses, we have undertaken a preliminary analysis of:
- Time taken to implement and take effect
 - Cost
 - Estimated demographic impact
 - Locus of responsibility
 - Lessons from elsewhere, including other parts of our own system, international examples and other sectors
- 9.1.2 We have been cautious in our assessment of potential impact, recognising that a number of proposals may 'overlap'. Taken together, we estimate that the

proposals can close the demographic gap, with a small shortfall in 2009, and that, thereafter, they will ensure more than sufficient numbers and quality of school leaders for the rest of the coming ten-year period of demographic pressure.

9.2 We have also sought responses which are as cost-effective as possible and would propose that we make use of existing resource where possible.

9.3 We recommend the phasing in of our recommendations with some short-term actions to target immediate demographic pressures in 2007-8, then longer-term investment which will significantly build the strength of school leadership over time. The most urgent step in the short-term is to ensure the necessary incentives to strengthen recruitment of heads in the schools where headteacher posts are hardest to fill.

9.3.1 The combination of proposals is designed to respond to the full planning cycle and provide responses which involve collaboration between national, local and school levels; they address issues of supply, deployment and development; they are designed to work within current standards frameworks; and they offer improvements to the perceptions and reality of leadership roles.

10. NCSL role and roles of others

10.1.1 We recognise the need for a multi-faceted approach to this challenge and the need for collaboration at a number of levels. However, in order to deliver this challenging agenda, we also recognise the need for national leadership. NCSL has, as one of its four corporate goals, which guide its programme of work, 'To Identify and Grow Tomorrow's Leaders'. We therefore see that we have a pivotal role to play in leadership succession planning. This will have implications for our own structures and resources.

10.1.2 We would seek at all times to work with other partners to help implement these proposals as rapidly as possible.

10.2 We conceive NCSL's system leadership role on three dimensions:

- 1) First, in **shaping** strategic aspects of the system
- 2) In **safeguarding** – through standard and policies, the overall integrity of succession planning
- 3) In **servicing** key parts of the system – through the provision of local data and tools

10.2.1 At the moment, we believe our most appropriate lead responsibilities would be as follows:

- 1) **Shaping the system:**
 - Supporting local authorities and groups of schools, including trusts and federations as they emerge, to strengthen succession planning and improve the quality of leadership
 - Undertaking a strategic communications campaign, the planning for which would be undertaken in close collaboration with key professional associations and TDA expertise/experience
 - Leading, with key partners, on the development and implementation of a strategy and series of initiatives to increase diversity in school leadership

- Overseeing and promoting FastTrack as an important contributor to succession through accelerated development
 - Implementing the Future Leaders pilot with partner organisations, and the Trainee Heads programme 2006-07, then applying lessons from those two programmes to the wider succession challenge.
- 2) **Safeguarding the system:**
- Publishing and, with key partners, disseminating the guidance for governors on succession and headteacher recruitment and retention
 - Developing revised requirements for NPQH, in the light of a substantial review and in the context of succession planning.
- 3) **Servicing the system:**
- Providing expert advice and trialling local-level data and associated tools and processes to support the development of local succession strategies, talent spotting, local development provision and career mentoring, and enhanced career development opportunities initiatives etc.

11. Next Steps

11.1 If the strategic approach and specific proposals are accepted, we propose the following:

- NCSL invite professional associations and other organisations, including TDA, to form a working party to develop specific proposals and brief for the first phase of the communications strategy
June – Sept 06
- NCSL to secure specialist support and expertise to first develop support material to accompany local level data, then undertake field-testing with selected LAs, diocesan groups and other local/regional groups
June – Dec 06
- NCSL/DfES to build engagement with LAs and other regional level bodies to solicit their support in the deployment of specific proposals
July – Dec 06
- NCSL to engage in dialogue with DfES and other partners on what local incentives might be used to address the most acutely affected areas
July 06
- Widespread consultation with profession at NCSL regional conferences
Autumn 06
- Chief Executive consultation with all Directors of Children's Services
Autumn 06/Spring 07
- NCSL to undertake the relevant procurement processes to secure the communications activity
By Sept 06
- NCSL to undertake the necessary data-testing and establishment of internal processes/systems and procurement to create local-level 'dashboard' data
By Sept 06
- NCSL to develop more depth on other proposed initiatives (e.g. feasibility studies, cost analysis)
By October 06
- NCSL and DfES jointly to consider the case for investment in the longer term initiatives prior to the next spending review
By November 06

Steve Munby
Chief Executive
National College for School Leadership

Appendix

In preparing this advice we have worked closely with an advisory group of key stakeholders which included:

- Professional associations
 - ASCL - Sue Kirkham
 - ATL - Chris Foster
 - NAHT - Mick Brookes, Carole Witty
 - NASUWT - Darren Northcott
 - NUT - John Bangs
- Diocesan representatives
 - Catholic Education Service - Oona Stannard
 - Church of England Education - Nick McKemey
- Governor representatives
 - NASG - John Adams
- Local authority representatives
 - Telford and Wrekin LA - Christine Davies
 - Rochdale LA - Terry Piggott
 - Sandwell LA - Louise Hughes
- Headteachers
 - Hazel Pulley - Caldecote Primary School, Leicester
 - Hilary McEwan - West Oaks School, Leeds
 - Di Nightingale - Houndsdown School, Hants
- DfES – Gill Turner, Laura Cunningham, Noreen Graham
- TDA – Robert Wood
- SSAT – Liz Reid, Sylvia Paddock
- GTC – Sarah Stephens, Jane Steele
- National Strategies (SIPs) - Anne Burrell
- In support: McKinsey: team led by Michael Barber
- In support: Demos: Tom Bentley, John Craig