CLERKS LEARNING ON THE JOB

Gillian Allcroft looks at the importance of continuing professional development

**An effective clerk makes an invaluable contribution to effective governance**

An effective clerk makes an invaluable contribution to effective governance, which in turn supports the success of the school and good outcomes for children.

If your clerk works full time in the school you have a direct responsibility for her/his CPD, but even if your clerk is self-employed and works under contract at the school it may be in your interests to at least part fund CPD to ensure you get the best clerking support possible.

Where the clerk is employed via a third party or LA one of the questions you could ask at the start of the contract is what training and support s/he will receive or has already received. This may influence your decision as to whether to take on a clerk via this route.

**Annual appraisal**

All clerks should have a job description, which should set out what is expected of them in their role – the main tasks s/he is expected to undertake. We have written before about the importance of the clerk receiving an annual appraisal; even if you contract with an agency or the LA to provide your clerk, there should still be conversations about what CPD may be wanted/needed.

**Joint responsibility**

Responsibility for CPD lies with the individual as well as with the employer. Clerks as well as any other employee need to think about where they might benefit from additional development – whether because they have identified an aspect of their role that they do not carry out as well as another, or because they would like to refine their skills still further.

In an academy this could be associated with taking on the role of company secretary and filing returns at Companies House, something the clerk may not have had to do previously.

Recognising a training need is the first stage, identifying where that training is available can be trickier. There is of course now the Clerks Development Programme, licensed countrywide by the National College for Teaching and Leadership. The programme has a number of modules and is aimed at both new and more experienced clerks. At the time of writing we are still awaiting information from the DfE about what bursaries will be available in the new financial year, which make it easier for clerks and schools to afford the training.

Many of you will also subscribe to a local governor training package. While this is unlikely to cover specific clerking skills there will almost certainly be topics that will aid a clerk’s understanding of the role and responsibilities of governors, which can only improve her/his effectiveness.

Asking a clerk to attend such a training event is not the same as a governor doing so. Clerks are not volunteers, they are paid employees and training is for their work – if they attend training events in the evening you will need to budget to pay them for their time.

Be prepared to look further afield for development and training opportunities, not just within the schools or even the education sector. Clerking skills are employed in a wide range of sectors and so it may be that what you need is available elsewhere.