

engage in the visual arts

Extend Leadership Programme pilot, March 2010 - January 2011

Evaluation Summary

May 2011

Education and learning people lead all the time: they work with ideas and vision; they network; they engage in partnership working; they create learning communities; they develop people, taking them on transformational journeys. (Extend Participant)

Extend – led by engage and funded by the Cultural Leadership Programme – was developed and overseen by a Steering Group of senior staff from five organisations, working as a successful partnership:

- Arnolfini
- engage, the National Association for Gallery Education (lead organisation)
- English National Ballet
- Creative Partnerships Sussex and Surrey
- Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia

The programme was initiated for two reasons. Firstly, to respond to a long-identified leadership development need to raise the profile and value of education and learning as core to the mission of cultural organisations. Secondly, to explore whether the attributes of education and learning specialists – and their approach to practice – are transferable to, and can influence, leadership in the cultural sector.

Co-ordinated by a Programme Manager, Extend attracted 31 applications. Eleven applications, from high calibre mid-career practitioners working in a range of arts disciplines, were selected. The programme comprised two residentials with external facilitators; placements; mentoring; and opportunities for peer support.

Residentials enabled participants to gain an insight into the characteristics of effective leaders and leadership; strategic planning; governance in the not-for-profit sector; and resilience. They provided participants with the opportunity to develop a range of influencing, goal setting and problem solving skills. Through learning on the residential, participants recognised the need to take responsibility for their own self-development and that authentic leadership could happen at any level.

The Leeds residential forced me to ask difficult personal and professional questions to unpick the overwhelming stresses of work. The course provided me with exercises and different approaches to get to the bottom of my work issues and think objectively, this in turn provided me with self confidence...[it] helped me achieve my first goals to understand leadership and strategy and it supplied great resources for future research. (Participant)

I left the first residential with fire in my belly, wanting to move forwards. (Participant)

My brain 'switched' after the residential and I thought: "If leadership is not coming

from the top, how can it come from me?" (Participant)

Mentoring was highly regarded as a focused and supportive professional development tool:

My mentor has helped me rediscover my passions, challenged my priorities and enhanced my abilities to self reflect and set realistic goals. (Participant)

My role has been about validation, support, encouragement but also ideas on how to put the learning agenda more at the heart of the organisation. (Mentor)

Mentoring has provided an external stimulus for gaining a new perspective on dealing with issues...and access to a different sort of network and resource.
(Participant's line manager)

Placements offered both participants and hosts the opportunity to learn:

I have thought a lot about how I like to work and how I work best. The placement which comprised interviews with different kinds of female leaders helped me reflect on this and formulate ideas about different kinds of leaders. (Participant)

My placement gave me an opportunity to put exercises and approaches learned on the residential into practice. (Participant)

Peer support was particularly effective in building a networked sense of the sector and an understanding of the wider policy contexts for the work:

The Scottish cohorts have been the biggest asset to share, discuss, support, soundboard and discuss our future. (Participant)

There was a huge benefit from sitting alongside peer leaders. (Participant)
For me, learning from peers was more significant than learning from the people up front' (Participant)

Extend enabled participants to access a leadership learning experience they would otherwise not have had, with significant individual and organisational impacts. During the programme, one participant began to cover a maternity leave leadership role; one acted up due to a sickness absence; and others proactively sought and undertook new leadership responsibilities, in strategy development, team building and developing partnerships. All applied leadership learning back into the workplace.

'The course really has had a radical shift in their thinking...The impact of such professional development is not to be denied. Their confidence has grown, and they have been able to have a voice...' (Participant's line manager)

'They have taken their place in the senior management team and indeed have brought a new dimension to the strategic and structural planning discussions of that group.' (Participant's line manager)