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# Bursar Development Programme

## Executive Summary 2003/4



## Executive Summary

This executive summary highlights the main points set out in detail in the *Bursar Development Programme Impact and Evaluation Report 2003/4*. The main focus is:

- the policy development leading up to the announcement of the Bursar Development Programme
- the case for school business managers (SBMs)
- the College's response in terms of the development of CPD programmes for school business managers
- the main activities in progressing the Bursar Development Programme to date
- the key challenges which face the programme over the short- to medium-term

### The policy context

Successful schools must be well led and have competent specialist staff able to manage finances and resources effectively and efficiently.

Until recently, there was no structured continuous professional development available to draw out the benefits which school business managers can bring to the smooth running of schools. At the NAHT Conference in June 2001, the then Secretary of State, Estelle Morris, pledged to train 1,000 bursars by 2006. These trained bursars would contribute to wider work on the remodelling of schools emerging from the finding of the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) study of teacher workloads. Consequently an increase in the number of skilled bursars would assist in improving the recruitment, retention, quality and status of the teaching profession.

School business managers can play a crucial part in remodelling the ways in which schools are run. This has been recognised in the consultation document *Developing the Role of School Support Staff*, and is confirmed by the evaluation of pilots and the first nationally run cohort undertaken by Manchester University.

### The case for school business managers and bursars

The case for robust business management skills within schools has never been more evident.

The PwC Teacher Workload Study (5 December 2001) found that there were significant gaps within:

- administrative support to headteachers
- bursar support to headteachers
- administrative support for teachers and senior managers

The study estimated that the average unit cost saving of transferring administrative tasks from a headteacher to a specialist administrator would be £11.50 per hour. This figure would be £8.60 per hour for tasks transferred from teachers.

A key element of the rationale for training and recruiting more school business managers is therefore to lever more productivity from existing resources through better management. The report argued that better trained, more highly motivated bursars and business managers, acting at a sufficiently senior level, will have a dual role in the remodelling of the school workforce.

First, they will free headteachers and other members of the leadership team from a wide range of school management and administrative tasks, enabling them to focus on the transformation of teaching and learning. Secondly they will, by using their expertise in resource management, support the wider remodelling of staff deployment across the whole school.

More recently a baseline study commissioned by NCSL and undertaken by Lincoln University found that in general, schools with bursars attract larger levels of standards funds.

In addition schools with higher funding are most likely to employ bursars and schools with bursars attract more standards and other funding. Consequently many bursars are able to attract funding into schools well in excess of their salary and so are able to cover their costs to the school.



## NCSL's response

In 2001 NCSL was commissioned by the government to design and develop a school business management CPD programme. NCSL recognised the importance of helping to shape world-class leadership training for all those working in schools with leadership responsibilities, not simply headteachers.

The Bursar Development Programme (BDP) was launched within NCSL. In designing this programme, the experience and knowledge of best practice gained through the work on all the programmes offered as part of NCSL's Leadership Development Framework was called upon, and during the pilot phase it was continuously evaluated in terms of the content, method of delivery and effectiveness.

The BDP first developed the Certificate of School Business Management (CSBM) – an entry level course which provides school staff with the essential skills and competences to enable school finances, resources and other activities to be managed effectively.

This course delivers skills and competence training covering financial management, human resource management, information and communication technology, administrative management, facilities and risk management through a blend of online and traditional face-to-face learning supplemented by tutorial support.

The course which was rolled out nationally in May 2003 is now well established. The number of places available have been increased from 750 originally to a planned intake of 1200 in 2004/05.

The course has already been commended for its design and is externally accredited at International Diploma level by the Institute of Administrative Management. The course has led to significant improvements in business management within candidates' schools, resulting in better use of resources and enabling heads and teachers to be relieved of many of these responsibilities, releasing them to do what they do best – teach and develop the curriculum.

Candidates have responded extremely positively to the training provided. For example:

- only 12 per cent of candidates have failed to complete the course – most due to illness

- satisfaction rates regarding the quality of training and support exceed 90 per cent
- even at this early stage of the delivery of the programme around 40 per cent of candidates are able to cite examples of how they have improved the effectiveness of their school

In order to meet the government's requirement to contribute to the development of the profession we have also developed a higher level qualification – the Diploma of School Business Management. This course will provide school business managers with the skills and competence to play a full role in their school senior management team.

Again we have adopted a blended learning approach which will be externally accredited. The pilot phase which trained 100 candidates is now complete. The content of the course is being further refined and developed prior to roll out which is planned for November 2004.

## Key challenges

The key immediate challenges for the College include:

- establishing a nationally rolled-out Diploma course
- fundamentally reviewing all course materials over the year
- maximising the use of the business management materials developed within this programme to benefit the College's other leadership programmes

However even though we are still in the early stages of delivery, the programme has demonstrated:

- a demand for this type of training
- a clear need for a permanent CPD programme for school business management which permits progression and further development for the participant

A key challenge over the coming year will be to both further develop the programme so that it remains relevant to the needs of our client group whilst ensuring the course is sustainable in terms of finance.

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**National College for  
School Leadership**

Triumph Road  
Nottingham  
NG8 1DH

T: 0870 001 1155  
F: 0115 872 2001  
E: [ncsl-office@ncsl.org.uk](mailto:ncsl-office@ncsl.org.uk)  
W: [www.ncsl.org.uk](http://www.ncsl.org.uk)