

North Yorkshire County Council
PPMA Awards 2019; Best HR/OD Evidence-based Improvement Project

With a rapidly changing educational landscape and added geographical and localised pressure in schools on the North Yorkshire coast, an Education Summit took place with school and business leaders to address social mobility of young people and to positively impact on their future. Initially commissioned by the 'Scarborough Pledge' steering group, the HROD initiative was endorsed by the 'North Yorkshire Opportunity Area' Board (NYOA) to challenge and improve practice in schools. The HROD project sought to collate evidence of the most pressing issues in HR and Organisational Development, and provide sustainable and creative solutions to enable improvement. Recruitment was recognised to be a major challenge, with the national picture confirming a third of new teachers left the profession within five years (2018) and the pipeline of trainee teacher entrants declined by 500 from the previous year, representing national shortfall (2017). Partnership and collaborative working on the coast was sporadic due to their individual responsibility for decision making, with little joined up thinking. Historically teachers moved from school to school creating a churn effect across area schools.

The methodology used in this project included:

- an audit of school activities, particularly in regard to recruitment and teacher recruitment challenges,
- qualitative analysis of headteacher discussions, using structured format to explore leadership and management challenges, organisation design, performance, managing problems, collaboration and disseminating good practice, school development/CPD,
- workforce metrics to evidence activity in schools,
- engaging key stakeholders in developing potential opportunities for collaboration and to influence and provoke future planning discussions.

The initial project spanned two full schools years, 2016/17 and 2017/18, extended to 2020 after a review of evidence at the NYOA Board, with delivery to 53 coastal schools, including a commission to design, build and deliver a school recruitment consultancy to boost attraction and effective partnership working. By gaining a detailed understanding of overall school needs for HR and OD, and through complete campaign management with candidate engagement from start to finish, the project has enabled schools to recruit more effectively first time, and alongside, develop a bank of talent to meet the predicted demand for teachers on the coast.

Reporting progress at Board level and engagement with key stakeholders kept the project on track. Early stages of the project were slower than anticipated with school leaders guarded and reluctant to engage and share. Targeted approaches increased engagement to 91% of schools in 2016-18, extending to 98% in 2018-19, including 1-1 meetings, open communications, sharing updates and seeking opinions ensuring a peer and sector-led approach. Committed relationships and partnerships have developed with school leaders, ITT providers, SCITT's, teachers and candidates. Schools could choose whether to be part of the project and learnings in engagement were applied to overcome potential difficulties in the early delivery of the recruitment consultancy approach.

Sustainable solutions have been introduced and applied, evidenced by schools changing practices to enhance their recruitment opportunities and increased partnership working, supporting curriculum delivery with major recruitment challenges (secondary maths). Evidence confirmed leadership strain, HR skills shortage and retention difficulties further to confirmation of the recruitment picture. A CPD programme is now underway for middle and senior school leaders enhancing knowledge and skills in managing change, performance management and handling difficult conversations, reflecting investment in leadership and management now, and to improve planning projections for the next ten years.

Recruitment approaches have been crucial to underpin the shift required for whole school impact. The evidence collated confirms these coastal schools:

- experienced the highest level of turnover for five years (23%);
- have 30% school workforce represented in the 50-70 age bracket (600 Headcount: School Census), forecasting short-medium term challenge;
- experienced a much greater level of staff absence in 2017 than other schools, with negative impact on consistent educational contribution and gaps filled by supply staff (mostly in secondary schools).

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To this effect, the success of the connected recruitment approach has been considerable:

- Engaged with 18 secondary and primary schools and become their 'Recruitment Partner' within the first six months
- Dealt with a total of 40 vacancies with 36 of them filled first time
- Filled 5 teaching posts with teachers from talent pools established from outside the area.
- Filled 7 support roles across 4 schools first time where previous recruitment campaigns have failed.
- Filled 11 posts in total with no advertising costs – saving each school on average £780 per post (based on a TES bronze online advert. Total saving £8580).
- Taking an average cost of a supply teacher (£160 per day) working in a school for a term (7 weeks) by filling a teaching vacancy we have saved each school on average £5600 (£1.2m across the year).
- Schools supported fully staffed Sept 2018
- Attracted and recruited 12 teachers from out of the area, who have relocated from Newcastle, Doncaster, Bradford, Wakefield, Leeds, London, Redcar and Cleveland (52% out of area).
- Reduced the typical 2 weeks advertising period to 9 days from advertising to appointment at Barrowcliff Primary through effective recruitment and talent pool management.
- Attracted and recruited 3 Maths teachers to work in 3 coastal schools through partnership working with a SCITT in the North East. These teachers would not have applied to a maths advert.

Anecdotal evidence and feedback:

- Performance is a double edged approach; there needs to be culture change about expectations from students, but working in parallel with staff. We need to be working together; never ever go in heavy handed, try and be reasonable, give them opportunity to show that they want to improve – hold honest, open and supportive conversations. **(Mark Taylor, Headteacher, St Augustine's Roman Catholic Secondary School)**
- The approach taken by the HR team has challenged us to think differently and has opened up collaborative discussions within the Headteacher network **(Mark Rogers, Headteacher, Barrowcliff Community Primary School)**
- Harriet has made a brilliant start, what a find! **(Michael McCluskie – Headteacher Scalby Secondary School)**
- James has revolutionised our recruitment approach. 35 applicants for our teaching vacancy was virtually unheard of before. **Ruth Blamires (Headteacher at Friarage Primary)**
- I'm really pleased to be appointed at Glaisdale. I found the recruitment process and having a chat with you initially was really helpful. If we hadn't spoken I may not have been inspired to go out to visit the school and chat with the head before applying. **Rebekah Lawrence (Appointed at Glaisdale Primary, relocating from Wakefield)**
- James has been brilliant for us and can suggest options when you feel you've explore all avenues. **Helen Isaac (Headteacher Seton Community Primary)**
- You really did go above and beyond what was expected in order to give me a good insight into working in a different authority. Once again, many thanks. **Oliver Long (Appointed as KS2 Teacher at Lythe CE Primary School, relocating from London)**

The total project was costed at £300K, and delivery has taken place fully utilising the considerable education expertise of NYHR schools team in HR and OD, and Resourcing Solutions, a team of qualified recruitment specialists delivering bespoke services to the Education Sector.

Return on investment to date has been evidenced through cost savings applied through recruitment activity outlined above, with most notable savings on supply costs (£1.2M) with further benefits illustrated through consistent and improved educational achievement of young people attending coastal schools