What is continuing professional development?

CPD stands for continuing professional development, and it refers to any activity designed to increase professional knowledge and improve practice. You may use other terms in your school, like professional development and learning (PDL) or in-service training (INSET); in this document we will use 'CPD' to refer to all professional development and 'delegate' to refer to anyone engaging in CPD. A CPD plan outlines what delegates will be taught, when, how, what additional support or resource they will be given and anything else that will be expected of the delegates engaging in CPD.

Why is clear and strong CPD important to SHINE?

SHINE wants the projects we fund to make a positive difference to the learning of large numbers of children across the North of England. This requires effective initial implementation, **sustainable delivery** and eventually **scaling** the project to more schools or settings, all of which needs teachers to have an in-depth knowledge of the approach and for it to become part of their normal practice. Sustainably changing behaviour is difficult, but effective CPD can develop teacher understanding and improve practice; planning for effective CPD in advance will increase the chances of this happening.

What does guidance and research say about effective CPD?

There is a relatively large body of research from around the world about what makes effective teacher CPD. The DfE has summarised this evidence to recommend these five standards for effective CPD:

♦ CPD should have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes

♦ CPD should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise

♦ CPD should include collaboration and expert challenge

♦ CPD programmes should be sustained over time

♦ CPD must be prioritised by school leadership.

What might this look like in practice?

CPD should have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes

Research shows that CPD that explicitly focuses on improving pupil outcomes is most likely to be implemented. Make sure that your CPD explains how the activities in your innovation will improve pupil outcomes and promotes high expectations for all pupils. Teaching delegates how to use pupil outcome data to monitor the effectiveness of the innovation can be beneficial, especially if you show them how to use this data to improve delivery. Asking delegates to gather pupil outcome data before and after using the approach and then discussing the data and the implications for practice with colleagues during the next CPD session can help them learn to apply these skills.

CPD should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise

CPD is most effective when it is based on robust evidence, so make sure your innovation is evidence-informed and use the CPD to give delegates an in-depth understanding of the evidence behind your innovation. Research shows the most effective CPD includes general knowledge about teaching and learning as well as content that is specific to the subject or approach and is clear about how this can be applied in practice, so plan your training to cover the theory behind your innovation before you show delegates what it should look like in practice. Making sure delegates really understand the theory behind your innovation will help them understand how it can, and cannot, be modified and still meet its aims when being delivered in different contexts or with pupils with varied needs.

CPD should include collaboration and expert challenge

Collaborative activities like peer support, structured discussions and professional learning communities can all help to change teacher behaviour and challenge misconceptions. These collaborative activities are most effective when they draw on research evidence and pupil outcome data. Someone with an in-depth knowledge of your innovation should oversee collaborative activities so misconceptions can quickly be challenged and delegates don't inadvertently reinforce ineffective practices.

CPD programmes should be sustained over time

Research has found that the most effective CPD programmes include a number of contact points with delegates over at least two terms. Contact points might include formal classroom learning, seeing the approach in action, one-to-one support from the trainer, coaching or engaging in learning communities. Plan a rhythm of contact points with delegates, set gap tasks for delegates to complete independently between meetings and allow time to discuss and reflect on the most recent gap task each time delegates meet. Gap tasks might include some or all of: trying a new approach in the classroom, gathering feedback or pupil outcome data, reflecting on implementation or outcomes and thinking about next steps.

One-off training sessions which last for a day or less are only effective when they aim to develop specific and narrowly defined practices like the use of a structured diagnostic tool or delivery of a very clearly codified intervention. Opportunities to practise the new approach should still be included in one-off sessions, and the other standards for effective CPD should be followed.

CPD must be prioritised by school leadership

Learning from CPD programmes is most likely to be implemented and sustained when the delegate has support from their school's leadership team. Make sure delegates' line managers understand the time and resources needed to implement your innovation well and are prepared to give this to delegates; it can help to ask school leaders to sign a memorandum of understanding. Even better, ask leadership teams to participate in some or all CPD sessions. The impact of CPD is most likely to be sustained over time when delegates' professional development goals relate to CPD content; school leaders can play an important role by setting professional development targets related to your innovation and supporting delegates to monitor the impact of the innovation on pupil outcomes.

Useful reading

DfE (2016) Standards for Teachers' Professional Development

TDT (2015) Developing Great Teaching

EEF (2021) Effective Professional Development