

# Cabinet Office Review of Public Service Leadership Development

## Summary Report

### Background

1. The government invests considerable resources in leadership training, and a vast range of leadership development interventions are being provided to public sector organisations. In light of this it was felt that there may be scope for improvements in the quality and value for money of the interventions offered.
2. In January 09 the Cabinet Secretary commissioned a review of leadership development provision across the public sector. The review was led by the Public Service Workforce Reform Team in the Cabinet Office in partnership with the Strategy Unit, the Civil Service Capability Group and HM Treasury. Its approach used a literature review, focus groups and research with government departments and the main public service leadership organisations. The review was overseen by a cross-government steering group.

### Strategic context

3. The drive for public service reform calls for a new set of capabilities from leaders to address new priorities. This must be reflected in the leadership development provided to the public sector. New priorities include:
  - Addressing key, cross-cutting social issues such as child obesity, ageing, knife crime and social exclusion
  - Equipping leaders to be more flexible in responding to the changing and complex needs of their community
  - Supporting the public sector to raise its game on innovation as a top priority.

### Scope of the review

4. The leadership development landscape is large and varied, with a mixture of providers including public sector academies, academic institutions, private sector organisations and professional bodies. The focus of this review was on leadership development provision through the ten main public sector institutions established to deliver training and development and act as a key vehicle for improving public sector leadership.

### The Public Service Leadership Alliance<sup>1</sup>

5. These ten organisations that were the focus of this review are referred to throughout this report as public sector leadership academies. The chief executives of these academies make up the Public Service Leadership Alliance (PSLA), and the ten are listed below:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The PSLA changed its name to *Public Service Leadership (PSL)* after this review was completed.

<sup>2</sup> Public Service Leadership now also includes Public Service Management Wales (PSMW), which aims to build the capacity of managers and leaders to improve the delivery of services in Wales.

Academy	Main customer	Date of (re)launch	Status
National School of Government	Civil Service	2005	Non-ministerial department
NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement	NHS	2005	Special Health Authority (arms length)
National Policing Improvement Agency	Police	2007	Non-departmental public body
Defence Academy	Armed forces	2002	Executive Agency
Fire and Rescue College	Fire and Rescue Service	1992	Executive Agency and Trading Fund
Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)	Local authorities	1999	Owned by Local Government Association
Leadership Centre for Local Government	Local authorities	2004	Charity
National College for School Leadership	State schools	2000	Non-departmental public body
Leadership Foundation for Higher Education	Higher education	2004	Company and charity
Learning and Skills Improvement Service	Further education	2008	Company and charity

6. Despite the label of ‘leadership academies’, leadership development is only a small part of their overall function. The range of roles includes:

- interventions focused on developing the leadership capacity of existing or future leaders in the sector, such as research or experiential learning
- interventions focused on improving the operational capacity of staff in the sector, such as NHS courses on patient safety
- improvement and development schemes on behalf of government, for example the IDeA runs the national Beacons scheme for local government, and
- other functions beyond leadership, improvement and operational training, for example the National Policing Improvement Agency runs the national DNA database.

7. It is also important to note that although the review focused solely on leadership development provision from the public service leadership academies, the leadership development market through the private sector and academic institutions is much larger. This may require further examination.

### Objectives of the review

8. The review considered whether leadership academies are fit for purpose for developing the leadership capability necessary to meet key public sector challenges. It looked in particular at whether it is possible to achieve:

- better **value for money**
- better alignment with **government objectives**
- more **common approaches to leadership** across sectors, and
- public sector leadership that is **responsive** to system wide public sector

challenges.

9. The review addressed these objectives by dividing them into three workstreams:

- **Effectiveness of leadership interventions and outcomes**, including:
  - alignment of interventions with government and sector strategic objectives
  - the effectiveness of leadership frameworks
  - whether leadership interventions are fit for purpose
  - the strength of evaluation mechanisms
- **Value for money**, including:
  - whether efficiency savings can be made by rationalising back office operations
  - whether savings can be made through collaborative procurement
- **Efficient and effective provision**, including:
  - whether existing provision is optimising efficiency and effectiveness
  - whether provision can be improved through collaboration and joint delivery
  - whether improvements can be achieved by reforming the model of provision.

## **Findings and recommendations**

10. The review made a number of findings within these headings which formed three sets of recommendations. Some of the recommendations are for the academies to take forward and some are the prime responsibility of government departments: all of them require a joint approach to improvement and collaboration across government and its leadership academies.

11. The three sets of recommendations are:

### ***Increase the academies' ability to build future leaders***

- Build upon the academies' existing leadership frameworks to form a coherent set of **national leadership principles** that align with the changing context of public service leadership.
- Support the PSLA to move towards **innovative** leadership development interventions that focus on leading **across the system**, and eliminate any duplication across the PSLA.
- Link evaluation to public service reform priorities and creating effective leaders, through the introduction of an **evaluation framework for all public services leadership academies** to support benchmarking.

### ***Drive out inefficiency***

- Explore options for the PSLA to **improve procurement** through the use of professional buying organisations or a **more collaborative strategy**.
- Consider moving to lower cost back office options such as **shared services** or **outsourcing**, based on evidence that cost savings in excess of 20 per cent can be achieved.
- Create and maintain a **core suite of quantitative and qualitative management and operational information** in each academy in order to support value for money benchmarking.

### ***Deliver improvements and value for money through better provision***

- Strengthen the **self-improvement function** of the academies by expanding the composition of the PSLA and strengthening its role as an improvement body, with defined improvement objectives, an action plan for delivery, processes to track progress, and increased corporate oversight led by a permanent secretary with support from the Cabinet Office.
- **Use direct departmental funding as a lever** for encouraging joint provision of cross-sector interventions. One option is to explore the idea of a top-sliced **Challenge Fund**, which could be held centrally or by one of the academies (the NSG for example) on behalf of the PSLA, to incentivise joint provision and stronger collaboration.
- Ensure more alignment with departmental objectives through a general **set of conditions** for the academies to operate, including a requirement to provide interventions that meet certain principles (such as value for money and cross-sector collaboration).
- Use **collective departmental purchasing power** to commission new and innovative systems wide interventions.
- Explore moving towards more use of client-orientated '**intelligent commissioner**' **models** (where the academy *commissions* interventions for its customers), which could support departments by **acting as a broker** for commissioning better value leadership interventions from other private sector providers.

### **Next steps**

12. Taking forward the recommendations of the report will require action from a number of stakeholders. To coordinate action a light touch overarching steering group may be required, possibly made up of representatives from departments that sponsor academies. This could have the additional responsibility of mirroring the remit of the PSLA by working across government to take a strategic view of its leadership requirements and relationship with the leadership academies.

Cabinet Office  
Public Services Reform Group (Workforce Reform)

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