

Professional Development Advisers (PDAs) eCPD programme

Issue 11 of Briefing carried an article by Markos Tiris telling us about the launch of the eCPD programme. Now **Rachel Pollard**, the Communications Manager for the PDAs eCPD programme, gives us an update by means of reporting the progress and views of three of the teachers who are doing it.

Launched in February 2009, the PDAs eCPD programme delivered on behalf of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) by BDP Learning, is designed to enhance teaching and learning through effective use of technology. It helps fulfil part of the Institute for Learning's (IfL's) minimum requirement of 30 hours (or pro rata) continuing professional development (CPD) per year for teachers and trainers, helps meet the new teaching standards and Ofsted inspection requirements, improves learners' employability as well as supporting whole organisational approaches to harnessing technology for learning.

The PDAs eCPD programme builds on other e-learning and e-leadership initiatives and complements the successful E-Guides eCPD training programme developed and delivered by NIACE. Both programmes form a cornerstone in the delivery of the 21st Century Skills outlined in 'Harnessing Technology for Next Generation Learning'.

eCPD Online Learning Space

In addition to face-to-face training and mentoring support, the programme is supported by the new **eCPD Online Learning Space (OLS)**; <http://ecpd.bdplearning.com>. The OLS has been developed with representatives from the learning and skills sector and provides PDAs, E-Guides and practitioners from across the whole sector access to the following:

- A new, simplified **eCPD framework** which provides a nationally recognised structure for professional development.
- An interactive **CPD planning tool** which has been designed to mirror and fit with the structure of the IfL's REFLECT tool.
- Lively **discussion forums** where users can share comments, ideas and advice, and conduct peer-to-peer review of activities and experiences.
- A growing library of **resources and case studies** provided by practitioners from across the sector to support the development of effective practice.

Following overwhelming interest from the sector in the PDAs eCPD training, a new online multimedia version of the training programme for supported self study is currently in development. It will be available on the OLS during 2010.

The launch in 2009

When the PDAs eCPD programme was formally launched at a live and virtual event in February 2009, organisations from across the sector voiced their support.

At the launch, Toni Fazaeli, Chief Executive of the Institute for Learning (IfL), said: "We have just launched our new five-year

strategy and we aim to exploit new technologies for all they're worth to benefit learners. This is a huge challenge with over 180,000 IfL members and the eCPD programme interacts with our REFLECT eportfolio to form a crucial part in encouraging our members to use new technologies effectively."

PDAs and Advanced PDAs eCPD training

Since the launch of the programme, over 520 PDAs and 30 Advanced PDAs from work-based learning environments, further education establishments, adult and community learning centres, offender learning providers and sixth form colleges have been trained to develop their understanding of e-learning and to champion e-learning approaches across the whole of their organisations.

We interviewed a selection of PDAs to find out how the programme is helping them and their colleagues to better embrace technology in teaching and learning.

Ashton Sixth Form College

Sandra Taylor is ILT Coordinator at Ashton Sixth Form College near Manchester, a college with 2,000 students. IT staff training is her responsibility, so when the need for a PDA arose she was the natural choice.

Sandra was one of the first cohort to be trained and describes the PDA training as *"the best e-learning and ILT training I've ever had. I've done many other courses but the PDA training was by far the best."* ... *"We were given some really good tools to take away and use with colleagues and the action planning was excellent."*

When the opportunity to take the Advanced PDA course arose, Sandra's managers were keen for her to train so that more teachers could make effective use of the technology at their disposal. Sandra is now developing five additional PDAs within her organisation from varied backgrounds: teaching staff, lifelong learning, learning technology and the Learning and Resources Centre. She is working to a deadline of end March 2010 to complete their training and plans to follow-up individual tutoring with formal training in 2010. Each PDA will have the responsibility for training three further members of staff, ensuring that good practice is disseminated throughout the college.

Sandra adds, *"A version of the eCPD framework specifically for mobile technology has just been released, which is ideal for us as we have recently become a centre of excellence in this area."*

Hull Adult Education and Hull Training

Theresa Rowland, Development Officer for Hull Adult Education and Hull Training, volunteered for the PDA role after over 10 years with Hull Adult Education.. She works on a wide variety of projects with students and technology, from learners with autism to using IT for teaching English as a second language, teenage parents on web quests and primary schools helping pupils to design their own websites. Theresa is the main PDA for the service which employs 500 staff and caters for 5,000 students, she works with 10 E-Guides and an assistant PDA.

She says: *"On the eCPD training I was able to meet other trainers and discuss common challenges. The most valuable part of the training so far has been the action planning and the training packs. The peer networking side is also helpful – it's good to see how people from other settings, such as colleges, are using their equipment and software for teaching and learning. There are some great links on the OLS – I found an excellent resource on 3D virtual academies and the action plans are well worth visiting."*

She adds, *"The management team are very supportive about the eCPD Programme and technology innovations and our IT manager has recently read The Learning Revolution white paper and is keen to support us as much as possible. We plan our use of technology carefully with a view to improving teaching and retention levels. The training will also enable the service to offer more distance learning to students."*

One-to-one technology support for tutors

Theresa has recently completed her Advanced PDA training and shared the knowledge learnt with her assistant who is taking an ITEC IT apprenticeship. Theresa's PDA role is one day a week, with the rest spent teaching NVQs but her assistant is a full-time PDA. She says, *"We are now able to provide one-to-one support to tutors and for him to go into the classroom and work alongside tutors. They're increasingly recognising that the technology isn't a threat and that it can make their work easier and more interesting for them and their students."*

Many of the NVQs make use of digital photography and MP3 files for evidence and the training is helping to ensure that tutors can aid learners in putting these together. The Art team has gained additional funding for Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) and is using Photo Story and Movie Maker so that students can translate their ideas from paper to digital and can leave with a DVD showing their progress over the course. The technology is also helping dyslexic students who are taking Level 3 NVQs as they can now demonstrate their knowledge through video evidence rather than by written submission.

The service is implementing a new virtual learning environment (VLE) to work across the adult education and apprenticeship areas as they merge. It will act as a virtual classroom, which will help to make assessing work and providing materials much smoother.

Theresa adds, *"We spent £100k plus on equipment across our four centres on items such as interactive whiteboards and wireless keyboards so that tutors can show videos from You Tube and other websites to enhance their lessons. Since the PDA and Advanced PDA training I've been able to instil more confidence and knowledge in use of technology in the tutors*

across the service, some of whom have found technology very challenging in the past."

North Hertfordshire College

Beth Boller, Technology Development Manager for North Hertfordshire College, is the Advanced PDA in her organisation.

The Advanced PDA training focused more on the strategic objectives. "It helped me to focus on the way we fit into the whole organisation and how to illustrate the way our work fits with national initiatives such as Becta's Next Generation Learning and Technology strategy." Beth is cascading the training she received and says, *"The Advanced PDA training was interesting and relevant. It was also timely as I will be going on maternity leave shortly and am cascading my Advanced training to five colleagues who will provide assistance to those covering my role of ILT training for the college's 1,000 employees during my absence."*

The college has two assistant PDAs and plans to recruit one for every curriculum area, plus others to cover support areas such as HR and finance.

eCPD framework supports engagement with colleagues

Beth has been using the eCPD framework to support her engagement with colleagues around eCPD and finds it particularly useful when setting action plans with ILT trainers. She says: *"Staff are really starting to build their skills and now want to do broader and more intricate teaching using technology. True blended learning is really starting to come through. Tutors are adding recordings to our VLE and editing them and students are creating podcasts as part of their coursework."*

Academics are now making regular use of tools such as the Turning Point classroom voting kit, flip video cameras and podcasts. A 2008 technology survey at the college showed that students prefer to communicate via mobile. As a result, the college developed its own texting system using Outlook so that academics can text students from their email system. The college is also enabling students to text questions and answers from home, Starbucks or the teaching room, to appear on a webpage. This can be accessed by tutors and students and provides a useful reference resource for all.

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For more information

- Register for free on the OLS <http://ecpd.bdplearning.com> to access the eCPD framework
- Places for the PDA training courses have now been filled, however you can receive in-house cascaded training or support from the PDA or Advanced PDA in your organisation or partner organisation. To find out who the PDA is post a question via the OLS Forum area at: http://ecpd.bdplearning.com/mod/forum/live_discussions.php.
- For further information on the E-Guides eCPD training events, visit <http://www.niace.org.uk/eguides-ecpd> or contact Raksha Kanani on +44 (0)116 204 2811, email: e-guides@niace.org.uk.