

Clerking Services to Governing Bodies

1. The National Context

The Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted recognise that the quality of the clerk is a crucial determinant in the effectiveness of the Governing Body.

The clerk to the Governing Body is the key person responsible for providing:-

- Procedural and legislative advice
- Administrative and organisational support
- Guidance to ensure that the Governing Body works in accordance with the legal framework and is compliant with necessary regulations

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) has been commissioned to develop a programme for clerks of Governing Bodies in schools and academies. On behalf of the college the Southern Educational Leadership Trust (SELT) and Hampshire Governor Services in partnership have been commissioned to undertake this work. The programme will complement Hampshire's existing accredited programme for clerks and reflect the current landscape of clerking and governance of schools.

2. Hampshire Governor Services

Schools decide for themselves how best to meet their clerking needs. Where they directly employ a clerk the authority has provided a job description and pay rate which they are recommended to use. This was developed to try to bring consistency across the authority and to ensure that in-school staff covering clerking had clarity of role and reporting lines.



3. The service provides training and support for all clerks. It offers a national Accreditation Programme for clerks (TAC) which is used by over 29 local authorities nationally and has accredited over 800 clerks. Portsmouth makes this offer available to their clerks. To date 9 Portsmouth clerks have either completed or are undertaking this programme. More information is available here: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/governors/>
4. The traded clerking service currently employs approximately 132 clerks who deliver clerking services to over 258 educational bodies across Hampshire, including management committees, academies and maintained schools. All LA clerks are expected to undertake CPD and to complete the accreditation programme following appointment. Clerks can cover more than one school and on average each clerk clerks for 2.3 GBs. 68% of customers also have committees clerked independently through the traded service. Following

recruitment clerks undertake a two day development programme before being linked to a school. Their minutes are monitored for the first few meetings and there is a biannual support /training meeting for clerks and an annual performance review process in place. In addition termly newsletters are used to support agenda setting and e-mail distribution lists used to advise them on any additional relevant matters throughout the year. LA clerks have direct access to the advice and support of officers for more complex issues and to the information resources on our web-based intranet site.

5. Key Challenges in delivering traded clerking services:

- Recruiting sufficient clerks of the right calibre
- Turnover
- Administration
- Employment terms and conditions
- Managing performance issues
- Managing Costs

6 Conclusions

Clerking is a key lever in improving the quality of governance in schools. Intervention often includes improving the quality of clerking in the school through provision of a trained and experienced clerk or supporting the clerk in post. Well trained and supported clerks are able to guide and mentor inexperienced chairs and good organisational systems help to focus governor activity on key roles and accountabilities. Maximum benefit is achieved where all meetings are effectively clerked and the partnership between the Head, chair and clerk facilitates annual planning of business and reviews of school performance and ensures sufficient governors with the right skills and access to training are in place.