Teacher Induction Scheme

Probation Supporter Guidance

May 2007
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recruiting and Selecting Supporters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Recruitment and Selection Process</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Recruitment and Selection Criteria</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Supporter Training</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Key Elements to Supporter Training</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Models of Supporter Training</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supporter Support</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Models of Implementing Probationer Support</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

This document contains guidance for key stakeholders on the selection, training and support of the probation supporter. It also discusses in-school and local authority structures used to implement probationer support.

The role of the supporter is a key one in the successful running of the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS). The aim of providing this guidance is to develop a greater consistency in the areas of supporter selection, training and support, as well as developing a consistency in the way that probationers are supported. By expressing what is to be aspired to in these areas, this in turn will result in the role of the supporter being given appropriate status and the probationer receiving the appropriate support to enable them to successfully achieve the Standard for Full Registration.

It is also an underlying philosophy that in providing guidance such as this the GTC for Scotland, whilst seeking to maintain and enhance standards, recognises the need for a degree of flexibility of implementation due to the great variety of local authority contexts in which supporters work.

2 Recruiting and Selecting Supporters

In order to achieve consistency in the recruitment and selection of supporters it is important that the decision making is based on an accepted standard and via an appropriate process.

2.1 Recruitment and Selection Process

The process of recruiting and selecting supporters should include the following:

- There is obviously a need for good communication links between local authority staff and school staff. This ensures, for example, that school staff are aware of any new developments about the role of the supporter, or that local authority staff are aware of any issues about shortages of appropriate staff. The local authority should alert the school as early as possible of the intention to place probationers in the school. This will give the school enough time to recruit, select and train the supporters appropriately.

- The SMT should promote interest in the role by explaining its importance and the professional development benefits to be gained by becoming a supporter. It is vital at this stage that the full implications of the role are clearly expressed. Existing supporters will be able to provide valuable insights and should ideally be a part of this process.

- The school’s professional review and development (PRD) process can play an important part in enabling the SMT to select staff with the appropriate skills and abilities. As such, those involved should view the supporter’s role as a CPD opportunity which in turn might enable an individual to gain professional recognition, either through the GTC Scotland’s Framework for Professional Recognition or as part of a claim towards Chartered Teacher status.

2.2 Recruitment and Selection Criteria

The following criteria offer a broad framework within which to recruit and select staff with the appropriate qualities required to be an effective supporter.

Apart from being willing and interested in taking on the role, a supporter should possess the following attributes:

- Personal Attributes
  - patient;
  - approachable;
• inspirational;
• enthusiastic about teaching;
• creative;
• supportive;
• empathetic;
• a good listener.

Professional Attributes

• a competent teacher;
• respected by others in the school community and as such is a good role model;
• a reflective practitioner who is committed to CPD;
• up-to-date on current educational thinking;
• sound knowledge of whole school issues, policies and resources;
• has knowledge of working with and mentoring adults;
• can conduct effective observations and supporter meetings;
• can give constructive feedback;
• good organisational skills;
• displays leadership qualities.

A supporter should be a competent teacher who is a good role model and respected by others in their school. This usually equates to someone who is an experienced practitioner. Although at first sight it might seem logical for members of the school’s SMT to adopt this role, experience shows that members of the SMT are not always the most appropriate personnel. Their many other responsibilities can adversely impact on time available to carry out supporter duties, while their management role in the school may act as a barrier to probationers seeking help and guidance. Furthermore, in the secondary sector subject specific supporting provided by a Principal Teacher in the same subject area can be seen as of critical importance. However, it is also important to recognise that specific school contexts may present a situation of limited flexibility due to the size of the school or department.

Also it would be beneficial if the supporter had received a significant amount of training prior to actually embarking on their role.

3 Supporter Training

3.1 Key Elements to Supporter Training

The content of supporter training falls into two main areas.

Knowledge and Understanding

The supporter requires to develop knowledge and understanding of the TIS and of the elements of the role. This should include the following:

• The big picture with regards to what the TIS is and who the key stakeholders are that implement it.

• Training on the details contained within the GTC Scotland guidance document which include:
  – the link between ITE and the SFR;
  – roles and responsibilities;
  – detailed knowledge of the SFR;
  – reporting on a probationer using the SFR.

• Specific training on completing interim and final profiles.

• Specific input on procedures and techniques for supporting struggling probationers.
• Making the link between the professional development occurring during probation and how a new teacher will seek to maintain and enhance their professional practice for the rest of their career.

- **Skills and Abilities**

  The supporter may also need training to develop the specific skills, abilities and knowledge required to enable them to carry out their role effectively. Ideally this should include the following:

  • Knowledge of teacher development;
  • Building positive adult working relationships;
  • Developing individualised support and programs for probationer teachers;
  • Negotiation and assertiveness techniques;
  • Recognising and being able to work with different adult learning styles;
  • Coaching via a problem-solving model, which includes facilitating the probationer to take on the appropriate responsibilities;
  • Carrying out effective observed sessions;
  • Conducting effective supporter meetings;
  • Giving constructive feedback;
  • Carrying out formative assessments of probationer teacher practice;
  • Setting realistic expectations;
  • Time management;
  • Identifying and addressing typical issues that arise;
  • Specific skills required for dealing with struggling probationers.

### 3.2 Models of Supporter Training

Whilst it would not be appropriate to stipulate one particular model for delivering supporter training some key principles should be considered.

- Ideally supporters should have received a significant part of their training prior to becoming a supporter.

- A partnership approach to providing training should be encouraged which would include:
  
  • using the professional expertise of universities and other independent providers that are able to deliver training that includes up-to-date strategies based on current research;
  • utilising in-house local authority-wide expertise in supporting probationers which would also ensure greater consistency across authorities;
  • using existing in-school expertise from experienced supporters.

- The training of a probation supporter should seek to take account of and encourage continuity between the support given to student teachers on school placements and mentoring and coaching initiatives in place for post probation teachers.

- Offering flexible approaches to delivering training, for example, enabling supporters to engage with it via distance learning where there are geographical barriers.

- Training that, whilst ensuring that all are aware of the latest developments, takes account of the level of experience of the supporter.
To encourage the appropriate recognition of the role of the supporter and the importance of
the training, serious consideration should be given to accrediting the training received.

4 Supporter Support

The support mechanisms put into place for supporters may well be partially connected to the training
they receive, but there are also specific areas of provision.

The overarching aim should be to establish a supportive environment within schools and local
authorities that ensures that appropriate key personnel are fully aware of the supporter’s role
and responsibilities. The basic aim should be to:

- ensure there is no ambiguity about how the 0.1 FTE funded time (which a supporter is
  allocated in order for them to carry out meetings and observations with probationers,
  complete profiles and provide any other relevant support) per probationer is being used
  to support probationers;
- enable the supporter to access the necessary support mechanisms;
- give the appropriate profile to the role of the supporter.

There should be the opportunity for ongoing supporter-specific professional development
needs to be identified which aren’t covered by the training discussed in Section 3.

Collaborative working opportunities can be very valuable to enable supporters to learn from
each other’s experiences. This could involve, for example, supporters doing observations in
another school and sharing findings.

It would be beneficial to organise a variety of opportunities for supporters to discuss their
experiences and issues with each other. Such opportunities would ideally be separate from
those occurring as a natural part of specific training sessions. Such opportunities might
include:

- scheduled designated supporter meetings to enable face-to-face meetings supporter to
  supporter, and/or between the supporter and local authority staff;
- electronic communication systems which could simply involve establishing e-mail contact
  or in fact establishing a virtual learning environment that enables discussions and indeed
  resource sharing;
- simply establishing a telephone or e-mail contact list to enable supporters from different
  schools to be in contact.

5 Models of Implementing Probationer Support

Probationer support has been implemented in a variety of ways in the different contexts that arise in
Scotland’s local authorities. It is worth considering how these structures or models of support can
work from a local authority-wide perspective and from an in-school perspective.

In-School Structures

Whilst primary and secondary sector contexts could vary greatly it is important that a
probationer is supported by a dedicated supporter who takes overall responsibility for that
individual.

The other in-school role(s) of a supporter should also be considered when selecting them.
Secondary supporters who teach in the same department as the probationer can be beneficial
but cannot be an expected provision. Also, Head Teachers should consider the potential
impact of using a member of a school's SMT as a supporter. Issues can occur simply due to
other commitments or because a probationer considers it to be a barrier to be supported by a
member of the SMT.
In large school contexts, particularly in the secondary sector, there could be a person who is the probationer regent, who in turn oversees the various supporters allocated to probationers. In some cases there is another person between the regent and supporter, generally called a mentor. With such hierarchies good communication is crucial to ensure that the probationer and supporter are getting the appropriate support, as is clear understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations.

It is also worth encouraging others to give informal support to probationers, e.g. stage or department colleagues who can provide a valuable buddy system. This may also help to build potential supporter capacity.

- Local Authority Structures

The most common model for implementing supporters involves the local authority probation staff recruiting, through the school's SMT, supporters within schools. On the other end of the scale the local authority recruits a centrally-based team of supporters who aren't located within any particular school but who have a responsibility for supporting probationers across a number of schools.

The differing local authority contexts mean that these two model types and variations in between can be very effective when applied to those specific contexts.

(The Council is carrying out research that seeks to investigate and evaluate different local authority models. In time the findings will be used to develop case studies that exemplify the good practice of different models.)
GTC Scotland aims to promote equality and diversity in all its activities