

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In November 2005 ELWa commissioned the Leadership, Enterprise & Economic Development (LEED) Unit at Cardiff Business School to research good practice internationally on mentoring in and for the workplace, and to develop proposals for a mentoring for business programme as part of an integrated approach to complement other support offered by ELWa to businesses.

Since then, on 1 April 2006, ELWa merged with the Welsh Assembly Government to form the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS). As DELLS will be responsible for taking forward the proposals from this report the report refers primarily to DELLS rather than ELWa. Similarly references are made to DEIN, the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks, into which merged the former Welsh Development Agency (WDA).

It is well recognised that people are the most important asset to any organisation. Therefore, in recent years fostering of talent in the workplace has become critical. A well planned and managed mentoring scheme can provide the support and opportunity needed for any person to learn, develop and ultimately work to their full potential.

The importance, in particular, of developing managers and leaders in the economy has gained prominence in recent years. The Department for Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS), formerly ELWa, along with other key stakeholders such as the Wales Management Council (WMC), the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), and the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (DEIN), formerly the WDA, have all recognised the importance of mentoring as a key tool for developing managers.

Due to its increasing popularity and recognition, the term 'mentoring' and people who call themselves a 'mentor' has consequently been stretched to cover a wide range of activities, including business advice and guidance. This has caused much confusion in the marketplace, both in terms of the providers and purchasers. This raises issues of quality assurance.

The WMC's report Management and Leadership Development and Training in Wales – An Agenda for Action⁴, published in June 2003, highlights the importance of mentoring as one of the key development methods for managers, particularly those in small businesses. However, a recent report produced by the WMC on 'Mentoring in Wales'⁵, clearly shows that mentoring in Wales is "patchy, frail and not well understood".

The WAG's 'Skills and Employment Action Plan' (SEAP2)⁶ committed ELWa (now the DELLS) to working with the WMC to develop an improvement plan for management and leadership development. This includes a delivery model for management training in small and micro businesses, to include workshops, networks of managers and mentoring support.

The Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills is required by the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to enhance the involvement of, and contribution from, employers in learning. Alongside its standard funding of provision such as apprenticeships, the Department offers 'Business Skills Development' (BSD) with the aims of:

- encouraging employers to participate in the training and development of the workforce through the provision of advice, guidance and access to registered specialist support; and
- stimulating demand for learning by targeting activity to meet the differing needs of private, voluntary and public sector organisations with particular emphasis on the needs of SMEs.

This research builds on existing reports and provides concrete recommendations specific to DELLS sphere of work, which are both affordable and which complement its wider approach with DEIN and other partners to meet businesses' needs more effectively.

1.1 Research Brief

The overall aim of the research study is to:

"...design options for a DELLS-led approach to mentoring for businesses, informed by existing good practice in the field".

The specific objectives of the research are to:

- Assess the level of demand and need for mentoring for business in Wales;
- Identify issues for mentoring for business around the need for standards, quality assurance, the human and financial resources required to administer mentoring;
- Identify examples of successful mentoring for business programmes in Wales, the rest of the UK and farther afield;
- Investigate in-depth 5-10 case studies from the UK and internationally of successful mentoring for business initiatives,
- Develop concrete, costed options for a mentoring programme (or elements of) which: reflect the DELLS area of competence, are affordable and measurable, fit within the DELLS and the DEIN's joined-up approach to business support, and which meet the needs of business.
- Recommend a targeted approach for the programme which is in line with the DELLS typology of businesses and their attitudes/approaches to learning, and which complements the DELLS revised approach to support for businesses.
- Recommend indicators and tools for measuring outputs and results to justify public expenditure;

The research is focused on those currently in business in Wales, who are predominantly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). DELLS were looking for initiatives which could be appropriately led by the public sector.

The LEED Unit (formerly the Small Firms Research Unit) at Cardiff Business School has carried out extensive research on the SME sector, focusing on the specific characteristics that make some firms succeed where others fail. The Unit has also carried out extensive research on management and leadership development in Wales and is currently designing, delivering and evaluating management and leadership development programmes to Welsh SMEs and to the public sector.

This report will be used to make recommendations to the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills of the Welsh Assembly Government for a mentoring strategy for businesses in Wales in 2006. It provides opportunities for collaborative working ensuring an integrated approach to mentoring with key partners such as the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks.

1.2 Structure of the Report

The report comprises the following sections:

Chapter 2 outlines our ***approach and methodology***

Chapter 3 defines ***what mentoring is*** and the different types of mentoring

Chapter 4 presents the issues surrounding the ***demand and need*** for mentoring in Wales

Chapter 5 presents an overview of ***supply-related issues*** and reviews ***successful mentoring programmes***

Chapter 6 presents an overview of ***best practice approaches to mentoring*** largely informed through the desk research and consultations with key stakeholders

Chapter 7 presents a number of ***options for a DELLS-led mentoring programme for businesses***

Chapter 8 concludes the report and provides ***recommendations***