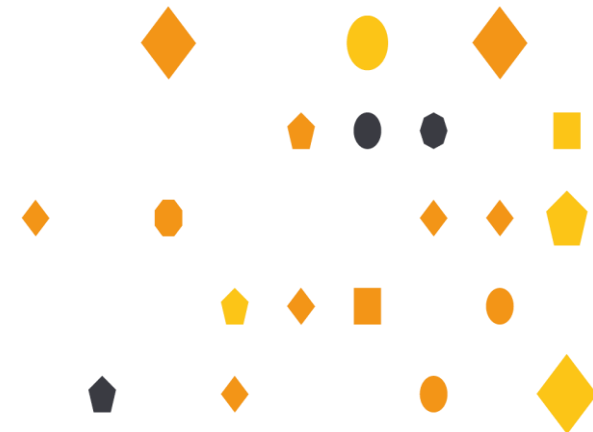




Why does developing and investing in college middle leaders matter?



What should the system offer to support, develop and reward effective leadership in the middle tier in colleges?

This report is designed:

- To help shape FE policy and practice
- To contribute to an evidence base for policy-makers that will generate further investment in the professional development of middle leaders

Methodology

- Online questionnaire – 235 responses (Curriculum/Learner Services/MIS)
- Semi structured interviews – 8 middle leaders
- Expert interviews, representing AoC, Ofsted, ESFA, NAMSS, FEC

Survey themes:

- The attraction of middle leadership
- Sustaining interest and commitment
- Professional development
- Role expectations

Middle Leader interview themes:

- The enjoyment, challenge and empowering nature of their role
- Team leading, team culture and the work/life balance
- The identification and support of their professional development needs
- The middle leadership experience and next steps in their career

Engagement with experts in the sector was undertaken after an initial analysis of the data



Theme 1: The attraction of middle leadership

Key points

95% of middle leaders enjoy leading a team with **90%** finding the role intrinsically rewarding.

87% enjoy translating policy into practice.

91% of all middle leaders enjoy interacting with the community their college serves.

45% of all middle leaders feel that their role facilitates a good work/life balance.



Theme 2: Sustaining interest & commitment to the role

Key points

79% of all middle leaders felt that they benefitted from the support of their line manager.

84% felt that their contribution was appreciated by their line manager.

87% felt that they a reasonable level of autonomy.

57% felt that the rate of change that they were experiencing in their role was manageable.



Theme 3: Professional development and the middle leader

Key points

65% have benefitted from college organised professional development programmes.

85% seek out professional development opportunities.

63% of the professional development experience received has impacted positively in the learner experience.

47% agree that their college has an inclusive learning and development strategy.



Theme 4: Role expectations (People leadership)

Key points

94% of team leaders play a key role in the recruitment of staff to their team.

93% feel a higher sense of responsibility for team members since the beginning of the pandemic.

85% felt effective in managing internal & external stakeholders.

82% felt empowered and knowledgeable in relation to coaching & mentoring team members.



Theme 4: Role expectations (Resource management)

Key points

89% of middle leaders feel effective in articulating the needs of their team.

78% feel that they play a key role in planning what resources they need for their team.

68% feel able to manage the external (regulatory) environment, including with stakeholders.

54% suggested that they do not have enough resources to address the needs and ambitions of their team.



Theme 4: Role expectations (Professional development)

Key points

85% of middle leaders feel that their values are closely aligned to those of their college and they feel empowered to make an effective and sustainable contribution to the success of their college.

74% feel part of a continuous improvement culture within the college.

57% feel that the changing demands of their role have not been matched by the professional development opportunities they have received.

46% are of the view that their college does not make full use of their skillset.

Recommendations and next steps

Investing in middle leaders

1. Establish a leadership qualification framework for the middle tier.
2. Formalise mentoring and coaching.
3. Encourage middle leadership networks.

Addressing the development needs of middle leaders

1. Evaluate middle leaders' development needs annually.
2. Focus equally on the strategic and operational elements of middle leadership.
3. Prioritise leadership for succession planning.
4. Design leadership development with reference to the priorities of the Ofsted (2021) education inspection framework.
5. Delegate leadership alongside the appropriate resources and authority.
6. Support middle leaders to engage with internal and external stakeholders.

Recognising middle leaders

1. Evaluate middle leaders' workload, expectations and conditions of service.
2. Provide specific support for the development of MIS middle leaders.
3. Review and recognise the career path for Learner Services middle leaders.

Panel members

Polly Harrow
Assistant Principal,
Kirklees College



Dr Richard Beynon
Senior HMI, Ofsted



Kirsti Lord
Deputy Chief
Executive, AoC



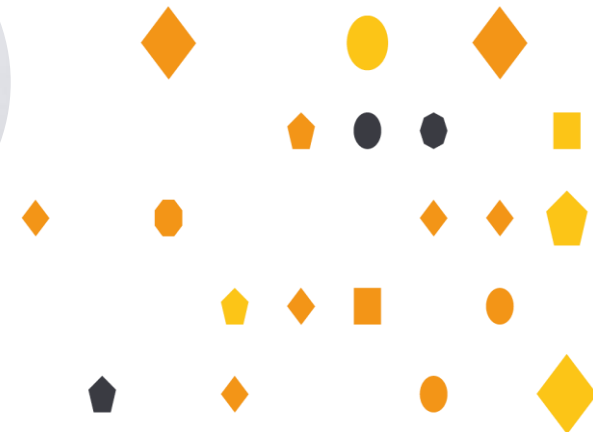
David Phillips
Managing Director, City
and Guild & ILM



Dr Kevin Richardson
Assistant Professor,
University of Nottingham



Emma Meredith
International Director, AoC



Thank you



Download the report here:

i-l-m.com/middle-leaders

