

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Making Better Decisions About External Expertise

We're looking for a few people to help *write* a practical guide from Work Collaborative.

The central question

This paper argues that the first decision is not whom to work with. It is whether external expertise is the right solution at all.

How should schools decide whether external expertise is the right solution before deciding who to work with?

Why now

Schools buy in a lot of external support. CPD, consultancy, coaching, school improvement partners, wellbeing programmes. Some is excellent. Some arrives, changes nothing, and costs far more than the invoice, because it leaves a staff team less sure of their own judgement than before.

The problem isn't a shortage of providers. It's that there's almost nothing to help a leadership team work out whether they need one at all. Most schools start with who to bring in, rather than asking first whether external expertise is the right answer.

What it is

Practical rather than theoretical. A one-page decision flowchart that takes a school through the sequence and stops at the point it is ready to go out and look for a provider. Alongside it, an eight to twelve page companion opens up each decision point: reflection questions, signals of good and poor practice, anonymised case studies, and a reframe of what external expertise is for: consolidating, deepening and monitoring practice, not only delivering content.

Choosing between providers, and what happens once you have chosen, is a separate piece of work. Claire Peet is leading the writing. The guide goes into the open Work Collaborative library, free for anyone to read, share and build on.

Two ways to get involved

Join the working group.

Four or five of us, meeting online across four sessions. You'd help shape the decision sequence, test it against how schools actually buy, and make sure the questions are ones a leadership team can answer honestly. We're after a mix: someone serving in a school, someone who has sat on the provider side, and someone with a research eye. Everyone is credited by name.

Share what you've learned.

If you've commissioned external support, whether it went well or badly, we'd like to hear about it. Case studies are anonymised, so you can be straight with us. It starts with a conversation.

The deal

Working group members receive a small honorarium. Meetings run under Chatham House conventions and drafts stay inside the group until publication. If you'd rather your name didn't appear on the final position, just say. The guide is peer reviewed, then published in the open library under a CC BY licence.

Fancy it?

Email Claire at claire@pdacademia.com and tell her which one appeals, or both.