

CPD Provision Report

Provider **Communicate-ed**

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Introduction

At the time of registering on the TDA CPD database (<https://cpdsearch.tda.gov.uk>) CPD providers agreed to take part in a formative evaluation process. This is being conducted by CUREE on behalf of TDA. The evaluation aims to:

- describe the range of CPD provision available to schools through the CPD providers database;
- find out how providers are using and responding to the TDA's Code of Practice for CPD providers in developing their provision; and
- explore the potential for using the Code of Practice as the basis for quality assuring provision made available through the database in a voluntary and self regulated system.

Our thanks go to Communicate-ed for participating in this process. This short report has been compiled using the following sources:

- Website
- Documents relating to provision
- Observations made on 5 November by a researcher visiting provision
- An interview with the provider who was also the course tutor
- Feedback from participants

Details of provider

Communicate-ed is a private company, offering training in the area of Special Educational Needs (SEN), which at the time of writing had five opportunities registered on the TDA database. The range of courses offered by Communicate-ed included *Examination Access Arrangements; Selecting, Using and Interpreting Standardised Tests; Supporting Students with Asperger's Syndrome;* and *Identification and Support of Students with Dyslexia*. The company specialises in running short courses aimed at various education professionals working with SEN students, such as SENCOs, examinations officers and educational psychologists. It also offers tailor-made provision for schools, colleges, local authorities and support services.

Details of provision evaluated against the code of practice

The provision which is the focus of this evaluation was the *Examination Access Arrangements for General Qualifications* course. The training aimed to 'cover the current JCQ¹ Access Arrangements regulations, with special reference to changes for 2010/11, including the *Access Arrangements online system*' (TDA database). Expected participant learning outcomes included being able to:

- **Understand** the JCQ rationale for Access Arrangements
- **Communicate** an overview of the regulations with colleagues
- **Describe:**
 - the range of Access Arrangements available
 - how to apply for Access Arrangements
 - the criteria and evidence for each Arrangement
- **Select:**
 - potential candidates
 - appropriate tests

The observed course was held at Clayesmore School in Dorset and was attended by around 30 participants from across south east England. Most participants were SENCOs, specialist teachers and exams officers from state and independent settings, both secondary and further education (FE). Other roles included a director of personalised learning, an inclusion team leader, a dyslexia tutor, a higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) and a SEN administrative assistant. The course was led by a Communicate-ed senior tutor, whose credentials included a number of books and contributions to publications on access arrangements and SEN tests. The course tutor is also responsible for the access arrangements process in a secondary school.

Using this report

The TDA's Code of practice requires providers positing provision on the database to comply with quality standards according to its code of practice. Based on an analysis of the international evidence base and the code of practice, we have selected four areas important for the overall quality of CPD and frequently underdeveloped in provision and/or in school use of CPD:

- **Sustaining collaborative CPD** – the Code of Practice (CoP) suggests that high quality CPD takes 'account of evidence that CPD that is collaborative and sustained is likely to have more significant and lasting impact on practice'
- **Encouraging reflection to inform judgements** – the CoP suggests that high quality CPD encourages 'participants to be reflective practitioners and use their learning to inform their professional judgements'
- **Helping improve outcomes for children and young people** – the CoP suggests that high quality CPD will 'help improve outcomes for children and young people'
- **Effective needs analysis** – the CoP suggests that high quality CPD is 'based on effective needs analysis'

Using the materials made available by Communicate-ed and evidence captured during interview and observation, this report sets out to describe the provision against the code of practice.

¹ The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) represents the major awarding bodies in the UK. It provides means of agreeing areas of common interest, such as timetabling and rules for the conduct of examinations, between the awarding bodies.

Sustaining collaborative CPD

Communicate-ed's practice related to this key area in the following ways:

<p>The provider takes account of evidence that CPD that is collaborative and sustained is likely to have more significant and lasting impact on practice</p>	
<p>Use some <i>paired and group discussion</i> during the session</p>	<p><i>Brief (1-5 min) pair and small group discussions were used several times during the observed session to allow participants to reflect on the new information, to apply or summarise their learning. Examples of such activities includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>(in pairs or small groups) modifying an exam paper in accordance with the norms and criteria discussed at the session;</i> • <i>discussing 'extra time arrangements' with other participants, looking specifically at the changes they'd need to make in their centres; and</i> • <i>discussing a case study with colleagues from a similar context (e.g. secondary, FE) or with similar needs and priorities, such as a SWOT analysis of their centre.</i>
<p>Offer some <i>suggestions</i> about how working collaboratively back in school/context can help to <i>embed</i> new practice</p>	<p><i>Working with colleagues to make sure appropriate learning conditions and arrangements were in place for students with SEN was implicitly expected and explicitly encouraged at the session. For example, the facilitator frequently suggested using various tasks and activities in participants' own context:</i></p> <p><i>'This might be something you want to do with the colleagues back at your centre'.</i></p> <p><i>Participants were introduced to a list of stakeholders they were expected to work with, including head of centre, subject teachers, SENCOs and learning support staff, examinations officers, students and their parents.</i></p> <p><i>One of the resources distributed at the event was a succinct guidance note aimed at SEN non-specialists (subject teachers) about exam access arrangements that participants could use (or adapt) in their settings as an initial staff briefing.</i></p> <p><i>Some of the workshop options included:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>opportunities for colleagues from the same setting to work together to consider the implications of their</i>

	<p><i>learning for the centre as a whole; and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>an activity aimed at designing a set of guidelines for the head of their centre. In this task, participants were asked to communicate the main learning points from the event to their colleagues.</i>
<p>Provide participants, in addition to sources of further information and knowledge, with opportunities for <i>networking</i> during the CPD event and <i>beyond</i> it (e.g. on-line forum) as they apply their learning</p>	<p><i>The training event PowerPoint contained multiple references to specific sections of JCQ regulations which participants were recommended to follow up should they require more detailed knowledge of particular arrangements. Other sources recommended at the session included Access Arrangements Online help-text, Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments, the Ofqual website, etc.</i></p> <p><i>There were some opportunities for participants to network with colleagues during the input, practical and workshop parts of the day. Some participants commented that this was the aspect they particularly valued, whereas others suggested that having more such opportunities during the day would have been helpful.</i></p> <p><i>The provider might wish to consider ways of providing further networking opportunities beyond the CPD event to help participants share their practice and learning. This might involve, for example, maximising and building on the on-line learning facilities that, according to the provider, are currently being developed.</i></p> <p><i>In their feedback on the report, the provider commented that they were working on setting up an online forum about access arrangements.</i></p>

Encouraging reflection to inform judgements

Communicate-ed's practice related to this key area in the following ways:

The provision encourages participants to be reflective practitioners and use their learning to inform their professional judgement	
Encourage <i>reflection on</i> the underlying rationale/theory for the practice that is the focus of the CPD	<p><i>At the beginning of the session the provider introduced the rationale behind JCQ regulations. Principles constituting the rationale were applicable to students with diverse needs, different awards and from a range of settings, e.g.</i></p> <p><i>'special consideration must not cause the user of the certificate to be misled regarding the learner's achievement'.</i></p> <p><i>When discussing specific arrangements, the rationale (generic principles) was frequently referred to to explain them. Participants were encouraged to make professional judgements based on their understanding of the rationale, particularly when their individual cases did not have specific regulations related to them or required a context-specific interpretation of the regulations.</i></p>
Provide <i>informal</i> opportunities for participants to <i>share their current practice</i> in relation to the focus of the CPD	<p><i>The SWOT analysis option for the afternoon workshops requires delegates to discuss what they currently do well and what leaves room for improvement. The provider may wish to consider how opportunities for sharing practice could be increased and how this element might be further developed within the existing programme.</i></p> <p><i>When providing feedback on the report, the provider reported that they intended to take this recommendation into account and include in the design and future delivery of the training a discussion with participants about the tests they currently use, and the ones they need to update.</i></p>

The provision encourages participants to be reflective practitioners and use their learning to inform their professional judgement

Support participants to consider how they might *use/integrate* the new practices and how they are similar to and different from existing ones

The provider paid special attention to highlighting the new rules and regulations (these were in red font in the projected PowerPoint and in bold type in printouts). All the changes were also summarised at the end of the presentation. A number of participants highlighted this as something of particular value to them as they could immediately identify what they needed to change in their practice, and how, in accordance with the new rules.

There were several short discussion activities, asking participants to summarise their learning so far and apply it to their context.

With regards to some specific regulations (e.g. controlled assessments), participants were presented with 'issues to consider within the centre' which gave them an opportunity to reflect (after the session, with colleagues in their context) on possible implementation barriers. For example:

'How can additional time be organised if the assessments are done in lesson time and pupils are due at the next lesson?'

Helping improve outcomes for children and young people

Communicate-ed's practice related to this key area in the following ways:

High quality CPD will help improve outcomes for children and young people

Introduce *activities* for participants to reflect explicitly on their *learners' needs and starting points* to *identify* their professional development *priorities* in relation to the focus of the CPD

Most of the training was specific to various student needs (such as temporary injury, English as additional language, dyslexia, etc) and how these can be addressed to ensure that students are not disadvantaged. On several occasions, the facilitator asked whether participants had certain types of learners amongst their students (e.g. with hearing impairments) and only covered the content that was relevant to participants. Participants (or their colleagues with similar responsibilities) are expected to attend an update course annually, which allows for the content to be selected for their current needs.

When observing and practising completing Access Arrangements Online and working with case studies, participants had an opportunity to

	<p><i>think about individual students (hypothetical – in case studies) and connect what they were learning with particular student needs.</i></p> <p><i>A major part of the session was devoted to discussing assessment of various skills (such as reading speed and comprehension), different ways of testing them and how students can be best supported dependent on the outcomes of assessment.</i></p> <p><i>The resources provided (nominal fee charged and donations made to charity) on the day included information about a wide range of tests. Copies of these tests, provided by the publishers, are available for delegates to examine during the breaks. The facilitator commented during the session and had informal conversations with interested participants, as to what was the difference between the tests and which might be best suited for participants’ students and settings.</i></p>
<p>Introduce activities to develop participants’ skills, knowledge and understanding related to the focus of CPD to enable them to make changes to students’ learning, experience of school (or similar) and their outcomes.</p>	<p><i>The purpose of JCQ regulations is to allow learners ‘to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment’. The facilitator encouraged the participants to support their students in achieving their best, e.g. through sharing her own experiences of when choice of arrangements made a difference to students’ results or by providing in the case studies student comments such as ‘My mind goes slowly when I know there’s a time limit... I know I can do better than the grades they are predicting.’</i></p> <p><i>During the day, participants could learn about new aspects of exam access arrangements, observe the facilitator modelling completion of one of the on-line forms, practise doing it themselves, and reflect on what they had learnt by developing access arrangements for three different case study students.</i></p> <p><i>In their evaluation forms and the feedback collected by CUREE, participants commented about their confidence of applying their new knowledge and skills and providing the right arrangements for their students.</i></p>
<p>Ask participants to outline which aspects of the training they would try applying in their context in order to improve learner outcomes</p>	<p><i>This was not observed during the session. The provider may wish to consider ways this element might be developed within the existing</i></p>

	<p><i>programme.</i></p> <p><i>The provider commented that, following their involvement in the current evaluation, they intended to add a question about applying learning in order to improve learner outcomes to their evaluation form.</i></p>
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Effective needs analysis

Communicate-ed's practice related to this key area in the following ways:

High quality CPD will be based on effective needs analysis	
<p>Collect <i>basic information</i> (e.g. job roles) about participants and base provision on <i>general understanding</i> of the issues around the focus of CPD</p>	<p><i>Typically, Communicate-ed collects data such as participants' position, whether they are the named individual to carry out access arrangements in their setting, type of their setting, etc.</i></p> <p><i>The facilitator was recognised by participants (in their feedback) as a specialist in the area of access arrangements, having published several key papers and contributed to developing Access Arrangements Online. Being responsible for access arrangements herself, the facilitator was able to bring a 'pragmatic' (participant comment) perspective and an 'in-depth understanding' of what is required of a setting.</i></p>
<p>Share learning objectives with participants</p>	<p><i>Course promotional materials briefly described the content of the course – 'will cover JCQ access arrangements regulations, with reference to the changes for 2010/11'. This was then further detailed in the agenda for the day. The presentation was introduced with a section 'I will be able to' outlining what delegates should expect to be equipped to do by the end of the course.</i></p>
<p>Discuss with participants what <i>future</i> needs might be on completing the CPD</p>	<p><i>At several points during the day the provider pointed to those participants who wanted to learn more about particular aspects, for example:</i></p> <p><i>'If, having attended the course today you decide that you need to know more about 'extra time' regulations, there's an on-line course available.'</i></p> <p><i>Links to further training and resources provided by the facilitator as a response to emerging needs (including those made explicit through written questions asked of the facilitator) were not limited to those offered by Communicate-ed.</i></p>

	<p><i>For example, the facilitator recommended an alternative training company to participants who were interested in accreditation or a specific online course.</i></p>
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Communicating details of resources/structure

Pre-course information was available via the provider and the TDA CPD database website as well as through Communicate-ed's mailing service. It included the target audience, venues around the country and cost. Details of the facilitator's experience and expertise could be found on the provider website and were mentioned in the course resources. When booking a training course, Communicate-ed requests participants fill in an application form and provide the details of their role, SEN related responsibilities and special access requirements. Confirmation and travel details are sent directly to the participants once they've been registered.

Provision strengths and challenges in relation to the code of practice

Method of delivery is appropriate to the subject matter of the development activity and supports effective learning

Despite certain limitations arising from the volume of information that had to be covered during the session, the provider made an effort to make participants' learning as active as possible. There was a range of different activities and strategies aimed at helping participants acquire and process information, including:

- attracting participants' attention to common misconceptions;
- a summary of the 'information covered so far' both by the facilitator and participants;
- remembering knowledge introduced during earlier parts of the session, making links with it and developing action plans;
- using different fonts to highlight the main/new points;
- the facilitator modelling specific skills (filling in online forms) and providing an explanatory commentary of her actions;
- participants writing down their questions and the facilitator answering them at the end of each session; and
- short video clips to break the 'monotony' of the presentation.

The majority of participants noted good balance of presentation, discussion and questions.

Participant feedback

The analysis of the provider evaluation forms shows that the overwhelming majority of participants were satisfied with the content and quality of the training: 94% of them ranked the training as 'excellent' or 'very good' when considering questions and statements about:

- the appropriateness of the course for them
- presenter's subject knowledge
- balance of input and discussion/questions, etc.

Participants particularly appreciated the volume of content covered and a number of them commented of their increased confidence and ability to carry out their roles. The pace of the session was perceived as appropriate by some participants yet others commented on it being too fast. Several participants commented they would have liked to have had more time for reflection and discussion with colleagues.

We were able to gain additional feedback from three participants. One of them, an exams officer with several years experience, commented that the course was tailored well to his needs and level of expertise. He particularly welcomed the new rules and regulations being highlighted in different colours, and throughout the presentation, which allowed him to build on his existing knowledge and easily process high volumes of information. He also positively commented on the flexibility of the course design, making it possible for him to select which part of the training (in this case, the morning session) to attend as pertinent for his role.

Two other participants particularly valued the facilitator's expertise and practical advice about access arrangements (e.g. *Communicate-Ed always reflect good value for money for me. [the facilitator] is actually doing the job herself so her advice is accurate and pragmatic*), the usefulness of resources, and particularly various SEN tests. Both participants felt that, having attended the training, they had the skills and confidence needed to lead on implementing the access arrangements in their settings.

Next steps

We have explored this provision against a set of evidence-based descriptors, which illustrate how the elements of the code of practice can be realised in different types of CPD. Communicate-ed may find it valuable to consider its provision against the full range of descriptors set out below in order to identify potential areas for development.

Messages from Communicate-ed to TDA

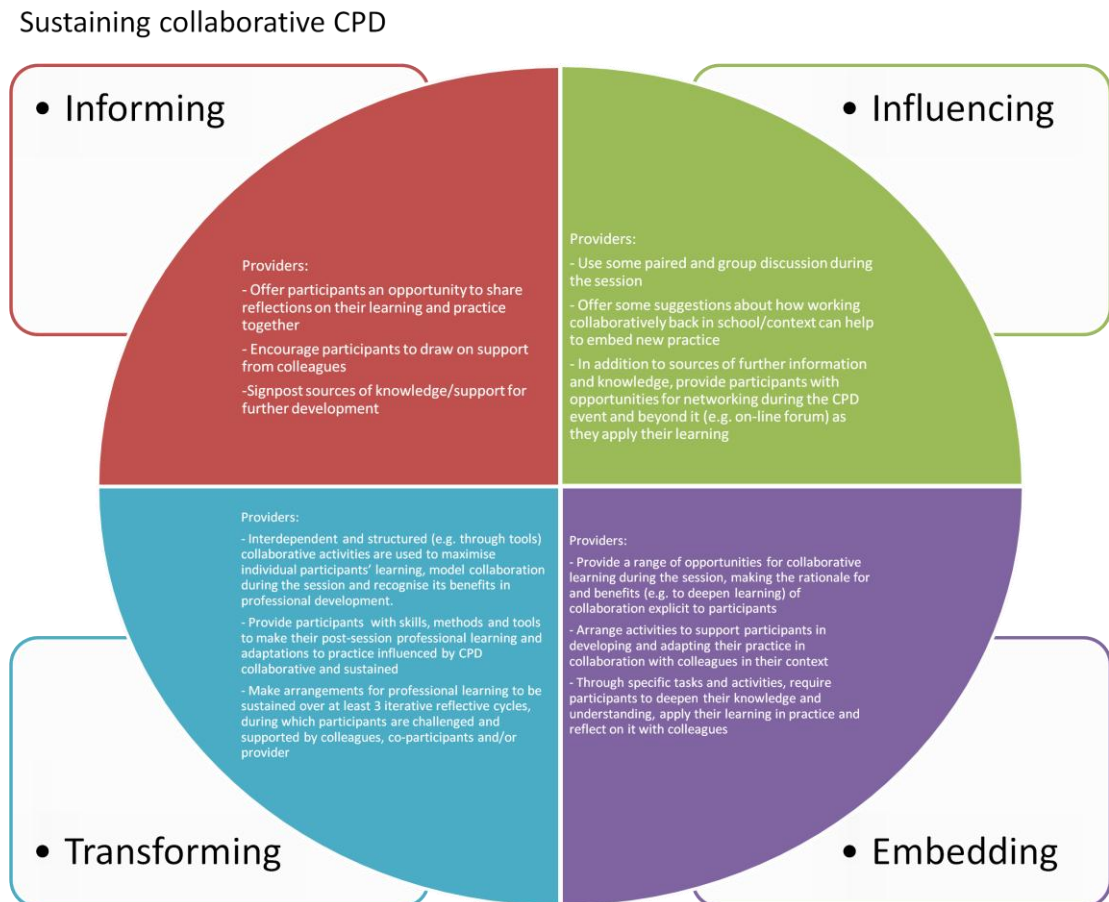
'Thank you for the opportunity to be involved in this review – I have found it encouraging to find that we are working on the right lines, but with some suggestions for improvement. I am looking forward to the training session in Coventry in March.

We have not been able to monitor how many enquiries we get from our entries to your database'.

Appendix: Descriptors of practice

Sustaining collaborative CPD

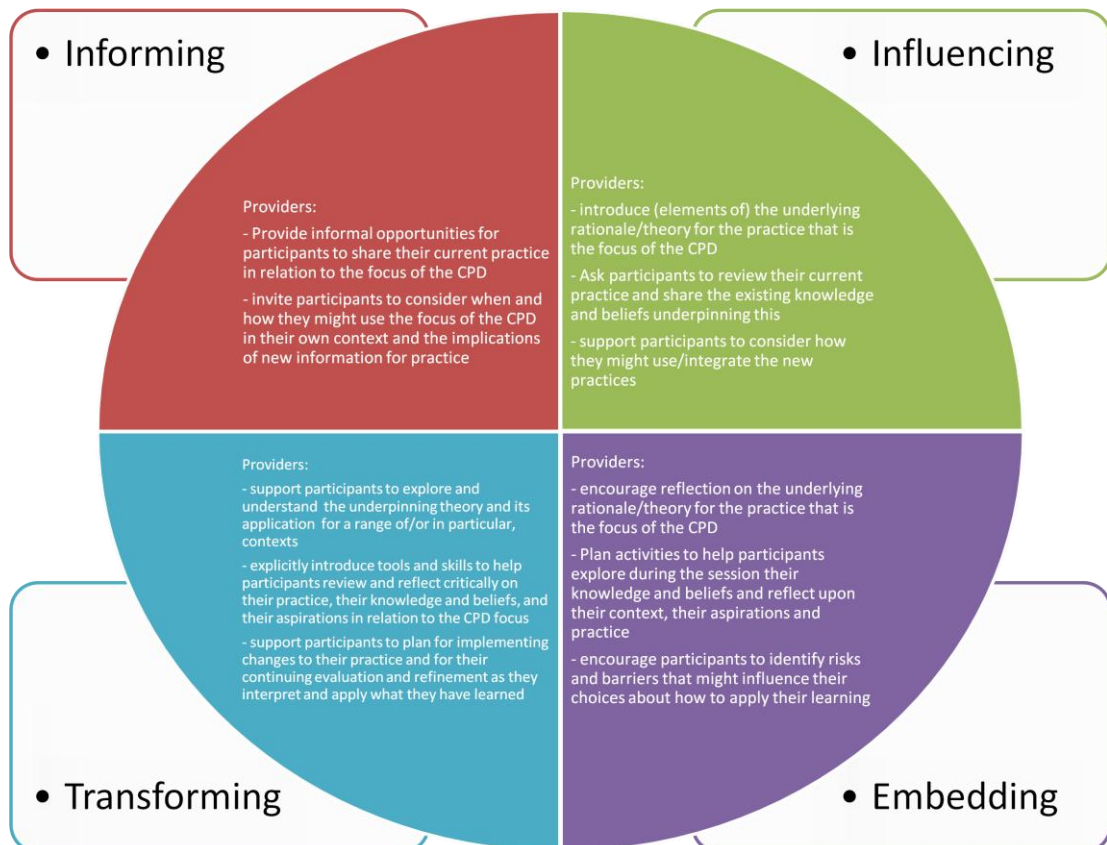
The Code of Practice suggests that high quality CPD takes ‘account of evidence that CPD that is collaborative and sustained is likely to have more significant and lasting impact on practice’. The descriptors below offer evidence-based illustrations of how this principle of the CoP can be realised in different types of CPD provision.



Encouraging reflection to inform judgements

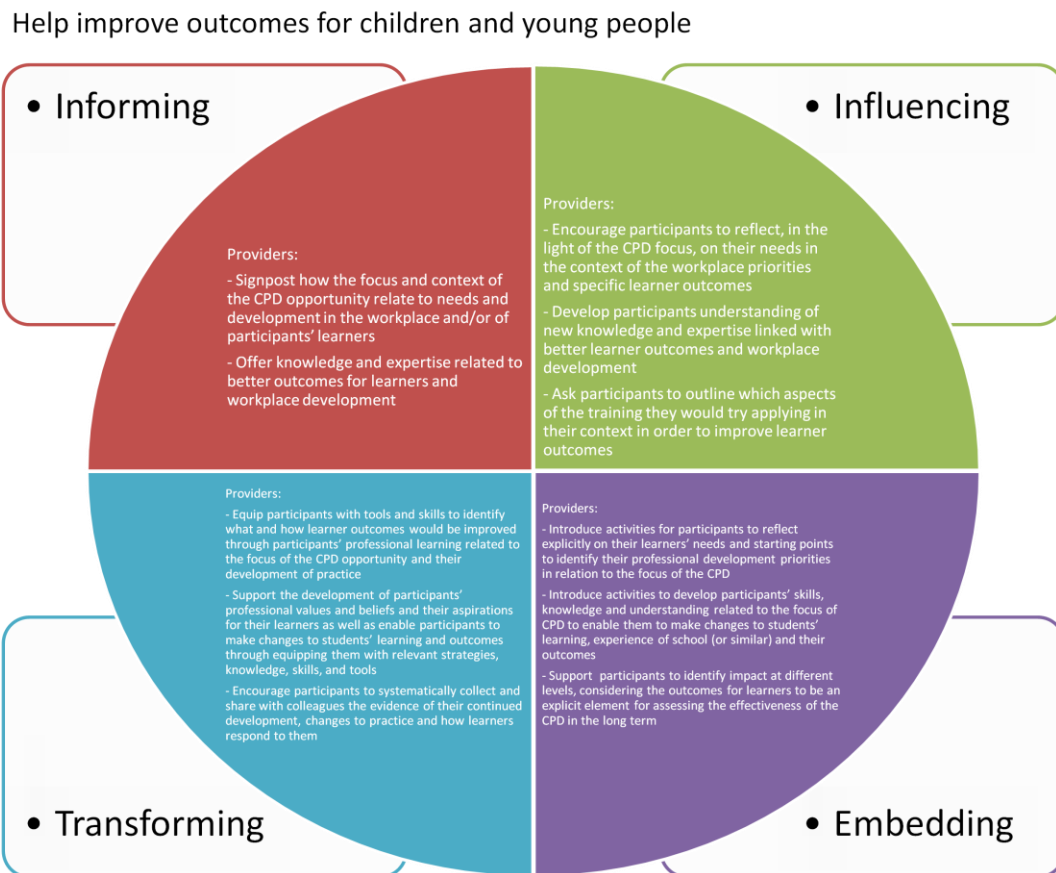
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Encouraging reflection to inform judgements



Helping improve outcomes for children and young people

The Code of Practice suggests that high quality CPD will ‘help improve outcomes for children and young people’. The descriptors (below) offer evidence-based illustrations of how this principle of the CoP can be realised in different types of CPD provision.



Effective needs analysis

The Code of Practice suggests that high quality CPD is 'based on effective needs analysis'. The descriptors (below) offer evidence-based illustrations of how this principle of the CoP can be realised in different types of CPD provision.

