

news update

Welcome to the 19th edition of the best value consultancy news update, a quarterly news sheet to keep clients and associate consultants informed of what we are undertaking and also our future projects.

'YO-ART' - Consultation with a difference

One area that APSE BVC consultancy has been more involved in of late has been securing the views of children and young people, our services users who will be the ratepayers of the future. The most recent of these has been in Aberdeen City where pupils in primary and secondary schools were asked about their school meals service.

'YO-ART' is a methodology used to engage and enthuse the young people to share their views in a safe and relaxed environment. Yoga and art are part of short half day fun and interactive workshops for schools.

Using mixed activities, drawing, colour, questions and discussion as a vehicle for consultation 'YO-ART' is providing



popular with pupils. During the workshops they share and self record their individual and collective experiences on a variety of topics. The most popular is school meals. Other subjects can be covered such as leisure centres, parks and school transport.

Lindsay Graham, one of APSE BVC consultants specialising in child health and education, feels it is crucial when shaping services and targeting resources that the client view is paramount. 'As adults we make assumptions that we know what children and young people want and like. Time and time again analyses of the pupils' YO-ART has shown us how wrong we can be.'

The pupil's artwork can be made into colourful durable

banners for display in the schools and these are evidence for school inspections that demonstrate 'pupil participation and consultation'. The workshops and banners help value art skills, encourage group work, literacy and confidence.

A return to Work studies

As featured in previous issues of the newsletter, one of the consultancy areas that local authorities are currently taking advantage of is a



return to traditional work study methods, adopting the direct observation approach involved in "time and motion" studies to review the productivity and performance of their services. Work study played a prominent role in local government for many years right up to the late 1980s with many authorities employing a number of management services professionals to administer bonus incentive schemes and provide manpower planning and routing data. With the advent of Compulsory Competitive Tendering, most work study sections were disbanded and staff were generally transferred either to client or contractor roles in contract support, direct service management, or to other council roles. This meant that the in-house skills were gradually lost.

Latest projects carried out by the BVC involving time study have been to review street cleansing and education catering sections around the UK, providing a "snapshot" of performance on productive and non-productive tasks leading to a number of recommendations towards greater efficiency.

If you would like to discuss these areas of consultancy or any other projects please contact: Andy Mudd, Principal Consultant on 0161 772 1810 or at amudd@apse.org.uk

APSE Interim Solutions: An inside view

Rodney Cook is a BVC Interim who has recently finished an assignment as a Policy & Projects Interim Manager at one of our member authorities.

After over 30 years involvement with local government front line services, including many years of managing a wide range of services, I decided to become an interim manager. I had worked for one local authority in a number of roles over many years and was keen to work in other local authorities.

There can be many reasons why a local authority may recruit an interim manager such as, cover for illness or maternity, failure to recruit, or perhaps with a need to review the current structure, capacity to deal with a particular project, or to review and raise standards and performance.

Assignments for interim managers are usually arranged through agencies which specialise in local government services, and as an Associate of APSE the first step for me will be an email or telephone call alerting me to a vacancy. If I feel the requirements match my experience and the location is geographically acceptable then after responding to APSE my CV will be forwarded to the local authority (the client). Interviews and start dates often occur very quickly!

Assignments will often involve me staying away from home (I am prepared to travel 200 miles to work) which is one of the reasons why I make myself available to work three days a week. The client, who pays APSE a daily rate for my service, will receive good value as I am highly focused, energetic and will normally work a 10 hour day.

My key skills include change management, project management, industrial relations, employee communications and consultation, political awareness, performance management, quality systems, improving organisations and increasing competitiveness, and delivery of quality services. Although I had opportunities in my career to be promoted to higher corporate positions I decided long ago that I enjoyed managing front line services and did not want to become removed from that task.

In recent interim assignments I have used my skills and

experience to make a difference in the services in which I was working. I have found that even though an assignment may only be 8 months long the results of an improved culture and improved performance will be seen and measured.

My hope would always be that when I leave an assignment I will leave a legacy. This may be improved management or health & safety arrangements, the foundation for an improved culture, etc, but most of all that the staff I have worked alongside will have taken the opportunity to have learnt from my experience and developed their knowledge and skills. I believe that mentoring is an essential part of the service which I provide and it is very satisfying to see the client's managers and supervisors develop their competence. I find that the down side of interim management is the uncertainty between assignments ... waiting for the next assignment to start. Here I am raring to go, waiting for that call

If you feel that that your service could benefit from an Interim Manager please contact: agardiner@apse.org.uk

Introducing the new BVC team

We are pleased to announce two new appointments to the BVC team: Gail Gibson replaces Damian Walshe (who was here on secondment) as the Senior Consultant. Gail is currently at the London Borough of Wandsworth where she works in housing and policy development and will start her new post on 04 January 2010. Alex Gardiner will take over from Emma Barrow as Client Coordination Officer. Alex currently works for APSE as a finance and administrative assistant. Both can be reached at the APSE office on 0161 772 1810.

