

The structure for the programme offered schools three important and linked inputs over a sustained period of 2 to 3 years:

1. CPD in the *Open Futures* four specialist subject strands, all currently outside the National Curriculum.
2. Professional support and mentoring in the management (organisation, curriculum planning, learning, teaching and assessment) of an enquiry and skills-based curriculum
3. Access to *Open Futures* Training schools – for peer support, modelling lessons, observation, collaborative planning, and sharing experience

Development work to embed *Open Futures* in schools, became organised under headings and summarised as:

- Leadership and Management
- Curriculum Organisation, Planning and Assessment
- Learning and Teaching
- Staff Development and Training
- Links with Parents and the Community

These headings later evolved into the *Open Futures* Quality Mark which supported embedding the programme sustainably in schools.

During the Wakefield partnership, the *Open Futures* team organised the schools into clusters of five, initiated school visits, learning walks, in-school training, conferences and group meetings which addressed individual schools' concerns about implementing, developing and sustaining Open Futures. This structure enabled strong, caring and collaborative peer working relationships to develop locally.

Open Futures was not only valued in and of itself, but schools were using the initiative to spearhead or underpin their work on other agendas:

- Healthy Schools
- Eco-Schools
- Every Child Matters agenda
- Literacy
- Curriculum reform
- Co-operative learning
- Community/parental links
- Social and emotional literacy

Impacts from the partnership

By the end of this two-year partnership, participating schools were using the project officer support to assist in curriculum planning and integration of *Open Futures* across the whole school, for example through delivering whole school training at INSETs or twilights. There were also examples of extremely creative curriculum and lesson planning. There was depth to the work taking place.

“It’s broadening the ways in which they can learn, from our point of view that’s through learning outside, learning through doing rather than sitting and being told things and with the P4C learning through being allowed to ask questions, so it’s more about active learning rather than passive.” (Partner officer)

The sense that *Open Futures* was different to other learning remained consistent throughout the evaluations. This distinctiveness particularly appealed to disengaged and SEN pupils. Partners and teachers reported impacts on pupil behaviour, motivation and confidence, and this, they saw, further impacted on achievement, both within *Open Futures* and across the curriculum:

“Children themselves have started to have far more confidence in themselves and far more confidence in areas that are not even related to Open Futures because they have been able to have success perhaps for some children for the first time in their lives.”
(Teacher)

Additionally, filmit began to embed itself offering, amongst others, opportunities for Gifted and Talented pupils to develop their skills.

“Interestingly for some of the quite bright little kids, filmit was a good challenge for them, really moved them on, maybe they’ve got creative skills that weren’t being tapped into in class and filmit allowed that to happen.” (Wakefield adviser)

Being more at ease with technology, in a number of schools, pupils were involved in a model of cascading filmit training through peer coaching. Where this happened, it enabled children to learn new skills but also helped develop self-esteem, confidence and a sense of ownership. Pupils were also invited to train teachers.

The evaluation was clear that *Open Futures* was assisting schools to address a broad range of school agendas and was flexible enough to respond to the individual needs of each school and its pupils. This was particularly strong in the area of Curriculum planning and learning. It was an exciting period as the team engaged in creative discussions with teachers about the nature of the curriculum, and about curriculum practice, – asking how teachers think and act in planning, teaching and assessing.

Evolution of teaching and learning

By the end of the Wakefield partnership, more teaching was now done by and responsibility taken by teaching assistants, notably in growit and cookit and to a smaller degree in filmit. Planning was done with the year group teachers and working relationships were significantly strengthened. Headteachers commented that *Open Futures* had allowed them to provide specific responsibilities for teaching assistants, many of whom led on growit and cookit, and in some cases filmit. In some schools there was joint leadership of each strand shared between a teacher and a teaching assistant. Furthermore, in these strands the pupils were likely to encounter ‘adults other than teachers’ in quasi-teaching roles, including parents, grandparents, governors, local enthusiasts and professionals. This was important as it opened possibilities for learning in an apprenticeship model through modelling, observation, participation, feedback and discussion. Therefore ‘how’ pupils were learning was also evolving.

Community and parental links

Growit and *cookit* were at the forefront of helping schools to develop community links. In many schools’ companies and businesses donated equipment or provided direct labour to develop physical infrastructure.

“It enthuses and excites everyone. Training inspires everyone and leads to great developments within the school. The pupils love it. Everyone can achieve. It’s not just another strategy, but a vehicle to impact on our community.” (Headteacher)

The evidence in relation to improved relationships, practical skills and motivation suggested that many *Open Futures* schools managed to replicate the more open pedagogy of the partners’ project officers.

With this momentum and the high-quality training from the programme's professional partners, practically all the schools felt that they could continue to train their own staff with occasional top-up training. One of the features of good leadership identified was that, once two staff had been on strand training, they organised their own whole school training and involved partner trainers in such training to address particular questions.

Senior leadership commitment

As one would expect, the headteacher and senior leadership team were crucial to the success and sustainability of the programme. When they were committed and had a vision for what *Open Futures* could do for their school community and understood the benefits, then kitchens were built, time was made available, INSET days were set aside, budget lines were introduced, creativity was encouraged.

If senior managers were not on board, the task for *Open Futures* and the teachers was much harder and, in some cases, didn't work. By this time, two senior curriculum development managers, Sue Macleod and Bob Pavard, were working closely with school senior management teams and heads. Bringing their own extensive leadership experience as Headteachers and Ofsted inspectors, they acted as critical friends to help with vision, planning, organisation, curriculum and assessment with the aim of helping schools achieve their objectives for Open Futures, school improvement and making the programme sustainable.

The local authority assessment adviser supported this view:

"Headteacher and senior management ... they make things happen, commit budget or facilitate fund-raising or both. They empower teachers to want to make these curriculum links be in the School Development Plan."

Curriculum integration

The new Wakefield schools were more aware of the need to integrate *Open Futures* into the curriculum from the start. *Open Futures* was referred to by the evaluation team as a Catalytic Innovation! A catalyst is an event or person that causes great change and it is evident that, in the schools, changes in thinking and practice were accelerated: schools' references to other agendas, their descriptions of community involvement, their professional development, internal strategies for disseminating training and their discussion around suitable metaphors. The reasons, as outlined in several evaluation reports, were that there was a great deal of desire to move beyond the somewhat narrow confines of the national curriculum and national strategies and develop a more creative, motivating curriculum.

"This is the key to everything that schools are trying to do, we want to turn out positive, independent individuals who are going to be able to make a positive contribution to society." (Headteacher)

What came to the fore was the importance of relationships, face-to-face time and the high-quality support and training provision by experts. A balance was found between the professional training and support provided by *Open Futures* and enabling the schools to become self-reliant. It is important to see this as a model of education, bringing experts into schools in a range of domains who not only teach knowledge and skills, but infect pupils with their enthusiasm and expertise.

The evaluation stated that some Schools saw *Open Futures* as *"...the mainspring for fundamental change in the curriculum."*