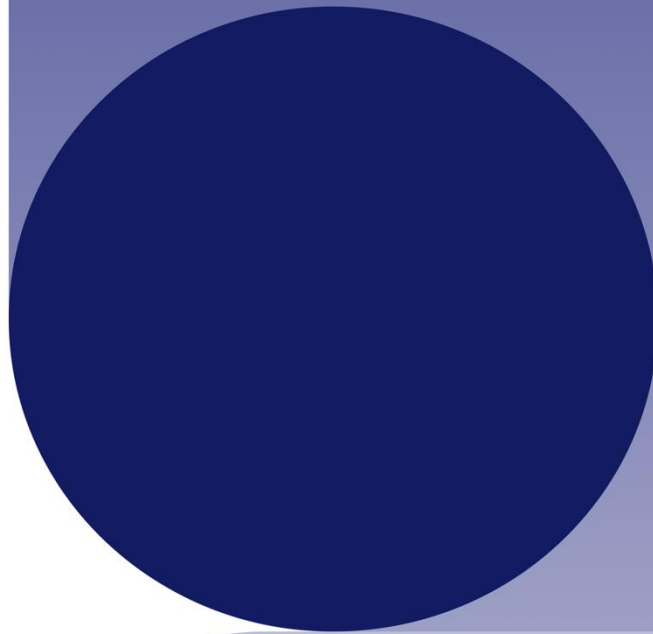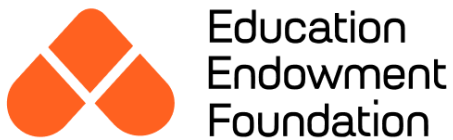**16–19 sector Continuing Professional Development**

Practice review

Sarah Boodt, Lewis Clark, Lynn Senior, and Charlynne Pullen

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List of abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AELP	Association of Employment and Learning Providers
AI	artificial intelligence
AoC	Association of Colleges
ATS	Advanced Teacher Status
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
EHCP	Education, Health, and Care Plan
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETF	Education and Training Foundation
FE	Further Education
FSM	free school meals
HE	Higher Education
HND	Higher National Diploma
HR	Human Resources
ILM	Institute of Leadership and Management
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
INSET	in-service education and training
IT	information technology
ITE	initial teacher education
ITP	independent training providers
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

ONSIDE	Offline, Non-judgemental, Supportive, Individualised, Developmental, Empowering
PD	professional development
QTLS	Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SET	Society for Education and Training
SFC	sixth-form college
SFCA	Sixth Form Colleges Association
SIG	Special Interest Group
STEM	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
T Level	Technical Level
UCET	Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers
YOI	Young Offenders Institution

About the researchers

Project team

- **Dr Sarah Boodt, Principal Investigator.** Sarah is a senior lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University with nearly 20 years of experience in further education (FE). She began her career as an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher before moving into teacher education. As principal investigator, she led the project's design and delivery.

- **Charlynne Pullen, Project Director.** Charlynne is a principal research fellow at Sheffield Hallam University. She provided strategic support and oversaw quality assurance throughout the project. Prior to this role, she was the head of research and evaluation at the Education and Training Foundation.

- **Dr Lynn Senior, Researcher.** Lynn contributed as a researcher on the project. She is currently teaching in an FE college and has previously served as consortium director for a large FE partnership.

- **Lewis Clark, Quantitative Researcher.** Lewis is a quantitative researcher at Sheffield Hallam University. He worked alongside Sarah and Charlynne to design and analyse the survey component of the project.

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Background and purpose

The many benefits of effective professional development (PD) for teachers in schools and further education (FE) are well-documented. It improves teaching and pupil learning (BIS, 2016; DfE and BIS, 2013; DfE, 2021; Fletcher-Wood and Zuccollo, 2020; Kennedy, 2014), can have a positive impact on well-being (Prilleltensky *et al.,* 2016), may lead to increased job satisfaction, and has also been found to improve teacher retention and development (Totterdell *et al.,* 2004; Tyler *et al.,* 2024). However, while there is a strong understanding of the characteristics of effective PD for schoolteachers (Sims *et al.,* 2021), existing research does not fully encompass the breadth of 16–19 education provision, nor does it offer robust evidence of how these principles apply in that context. PD is particularly under-researched within the sector, particularly among independent training providers (ITPs) (Loy, 2024). Additionally, inconsistent terminology surrounding PD (Loy, 2024) continues to hinder efforts to evaluate its quality, implementation processes, and strategic priorities.

To align with terminology used in the post-16 sector, this review uses the term Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to refer to the ongoing professional learning activities undertaken by teachers throughout their careers to maintain and enhance their teaching skills. This is distinct from initial teacher education (ITE), which prepares individuals for their first teaching role, and from staff development, which is frequently short-term and may not focus specifically on developing teaching skills.

Practice review

This practice review investigates current approaches to CPD across a range of 16–19 education settings, including FE colleges, sixth-form colleges (SFCs), ITPs, and schools with sixth form provision. It addresses a notable gap in the existing literature by exploring how 16–19 CPD is designed, delivered, funded, and experienced in practice.[1] Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews with CPD leads, providers, and teachers, the review seeks to generate insights that will inform a forthcoming guidance report by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) focused on the features of effective CPD for post-16 educators.

The review comprised two distinct components, each designed to address specific objectives. The first component consisted of two national surveys (one for CPD leads and one for post-16 teachers) alongside interviews with 14 CPD leads from diverse 16–19 settings (six FE colleges, four SFCs, two ITPs, and two schools with sixth form provision) and five providers of post-16 CPD. Contextual data were also gathered to understand how organisational characteristics and priorities shape CPD provision. Component two involved a two-part secondary analysis of post-16 CPD programmes: a broad review of 90 publicly available programmes; followed by a detailed analysis of nine selected examples including three CPD provider programmes and six in-house programmes across the different types of post-16 settings in scope. The analysis was framed using the 14 evidence-informed mechanisms for effective CPD identified by Sims *et al.* (2021).

Findings indicate that although certain elements of CPD are shared across 16–19 education settings, there is considerable variation between provider types. In particular, CPD in schools with sixth form provision and ITPs differs notably from that in FE colleges and SFCs. Common features across all settings include the use of organisational data, such as student outcomes and lesson observations to inform CPD themes, centralised planning responsibilities, a combination of formal and informal delivery methods, whole-organisation in-service education and training (INSET) days, and a general emphasis on broad, generic teaching strategies.

While organisational commitment to CPD is clearly evident in many cases, its consistency varies, revealing a disconnect between settings' policy and day-to-day practice, especially when viewed through the lens of teachers lived experiences. Notably, perceptions diverge between teaching staff and CPD leads, particularly in relation to the degree of autonomy teachers have to select CPD activities and the level of support provided to engage with them.

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[1] It is important to note that in some post-16 settings, teachers are known as practitioners.

The review of existing CPD programmes suggests that while most appear to incorporate all 14 evidence-informed mechanisms of effective CPD (as defined by Sims *et al.,* 2021), those related to developing teaching techniques are the most clearly embedded. In contrast, mechanisms aimed at fostering motivation, goal setting, and long-term embedding of practice are often implicit or underrepresented.

Key themes and insights

1. CPD provision and format

- In-house CPD dominates, driven by cost-effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability. Around 50% of providers also draw on external CPD, especially for topics like behaviour or artificial intelligence (AI).

- Delivery is multi-modal: face-to-face, online, self-directed, with coaching integral (81% of in-house CPD).

- CPD delivery occurs across organisational (58.8%), departmental (27.3%), and individual (11.7%) levels.

2. Design and evidence use

- CPD is typically centrally designed by senior leaders, with input from internal specialists and quality teams.

- Design draws on internal evidence (e.g. lesson observations, Self-Assessment Reports [SARs]) and, less frequently, student voice or national policy.

- CPD providers often develop CPD informed by teacher feedback through surveys and focus groups.

3. Focus and relevance

- For the settings in scope, CPD prioritises generic pedagogical[2] strategies (e.g. assessment, differentiation), with more limited subject-specific focus, especially in schools with sixth form provision and SFCs.

- FE colleges reported more subject-specific and industry-linked CPD (e.g. industry days and emerging areas such as green skills) and AI relative to other settings.

- While some settings include CPD focused on teacher well-being, it remains limited and inconsistently implemented across the sector.

4. Funding and access

- CPD is generally funded through centralised budgets (£30,000–£100,000), though access and transparency vary. Around 57% of providers report having a centralised budget, with departmental funding structures also reported.

- Some external CPD is government-funded (e.g. for English/maths resits), but membership models may restrict access in smaller settings.

5. Participation and engagement

- INSET days are universal, often used to deliver whole-organisation CPD and staff development.

- Around 79% of CPD providers offer ongoing CPD sessions throughout the year.

- Engagement in CPD varies seasonally, peaking in spring and post-exam periods.

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[2] In this review, pedagogy refers to the methods, strategies, and approaches used to promote learning as well as the underlying values and principles that shape teachers' practice.

- CPD providers' use multi-channel approaches for marketing, but awareness and uptake remain uneven, particularly in under-resourced settings.

6. Follow-up and impact

- CPD follow-up is reported to include coaching, goal setting, and sessions that revisit topics. However, 21.4% of teachers reported that they do not receive any follow-up support.

- Among settings in scope, more FE college respondents report structured CPD follow-up compared with schools, ITPs, and SFCs.

- CPD evaluation practices use staff evaluations, student outcomes, standards of teaching, and student satisfaction.

7. Teacher autonomy and experience

- Teachers are encouraged to self-select CPD, especially on INSET days but must align with organisational priorities.

- Action research and inquiry-based CPD is promoted by 42% of CPD leads.

- Half of teachers report completing most CPD online in their own time, reflecting misalignment with leaders' perceptions of face-to-face, supported provision.

8. Disconnect between perceptions of CPD leads and teachers

- Mismatches exist between CPD leads and teachers in:

    o   availability of subject-specific CPD (48.9% of leads vs 19.9% of teachers);

    o   perceived follow-up and coaching;

    o   access to well-being-focused CPD; and

    o   availability of protected CPD time (87.2% of leads vs 67% of teachers).

Output 2 – CPD programme analysis against Sims *et al.*'s (2021) 14 mechanisms (pg 16)

This analysis examined 90 externally developed and nine individual CPD programmes using a two-stage approach. The aim was to evaluate to what extent these programmes aligned with the 14 evidence-based CPD mechanisms (Sims *et al.,* 2021). Stage 1 provided breadth across the sector, while Stage 2 offered depth via detailed case studies.

Key findings

Key findings on CPD provider programmes involved:

- **Duration**: most programmes (69%, n=62) are under two hours long. One provider offers short 15-minute sessions.

- **Delivery mode:** around 66% (n= 59) are face-to-face, 31% online (n=28), only two are blended, and one did not specify.

- **Cost transparency:** around 24% (n=27) are free, but 66% (n=59) do not list a fee. Where listed, fees range from £55 to £495.

- **Coverage of mechanisms:** All 14 CPD mechanisms are represented across the 90 programmes, and 13 programmes demonstrate all 14 CPD mechanisms.

- **Most commonly evident mechanisms**: managing cognitive load, credible sources, and instruction.

- **Least commonly evident mechanisms**: revisiting material. This is likely due to short session lengths.

Key findings on individual CPD programmes (nine case studies) involved:

- **Depth of application:** there is evidence to suggest that the 14 mechanisms are more explicitly embedded. Some activities target multiple mechanisms simultaneously.

- **Most evident mechanisms:** goal setting, credible sources, instruction, peer support, and action planning. Others like revisiting material and cognitive load management are also prominent.

- **Least evident mechanisms:** praise/reinforcement, feedback, rehearsal, prompts, self-monitoring, and context-specific repetition. Gaps often reflect assumptions that staff independently apply or adapt CPD content (e.g. self-monitoring in appraisal cycles, subject contextualisation).

Mechanism highlights include the following:

- **Instruction (mechanism 6) and cognitive load (mechanism 1):** delivered via structured materials, clear objectives, and scaffolded content.

- **Revisit material (mechanism 2):** enabled through reflective tasks, gap assignments, and revisiting classroom content.

- **Practical social/peer support (mechanism 7):** prominent through group work, coaching, and collaborative structures like teaching triangles.

- **Action planning (mechanism 12) and self-monitoring (mechanism 13):** often tied to appraisal systems, facilitated through workbooks and formal reflection tasks.

- **Contextual repetition (mechanism 14):** less visible, but evident where explicitly tied to subject teaching (e.g. GCSE maths resit).

Conclusions

CPD across post-16 education settings reflects a mix of innovation and flexibility, alongside some examples that exhibit a culture of professional inquiry, although the extent and nature of these characteristics can vary between organisations. However, its impact is limited by misalignment with day-to-day teaching practice, access, and communication. Making CPD in post-16 education more effective, requires a targeted, inclusive, and responsive approach. The authors suggest prioritising subject-specific and vocational CPD (Shulman, 1986), while bridging the perception gap between leaders and teachers through clearer communication and more transparent processes. Providing protected time within working hours may support more equitable engagement, particularly when combined with feedback mechanisms that incorporate both teacher and student perspectives. To help broaden access, it may also be beneficial to clearly communicate available funding routes and consider ways to support the CPD needs of smaller providers. Finally, structured follow-up should be built into all CPD to reinforce learning and promote reflective practice that drives meaningful change.

The analysis confirms that all 14 CPD mechanisms are both feasible and present across external CPD provider programmes and setting developed in-house CPD. However, frequency and clarity of implementation vary. Mechanisms that support short-term engagement, such as praise and prompts, and those that reinforce long-term contextualisation, like rehearsal and repetition, are often under-emphasised or less explicitly recognised, though they may be embedded within broader delivery models.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

The post-16 sector in England refers to the diverse education and training options available to young people from the age of 16, typically after completing their GCSEs. This is a key stage in the English education system, which spans various settings such as further education (FE) colleges, sixth-form colleges (SFCs), school sixth forms, and independent training providers (ITPs). Students in the post-16 sector can pursue a range of vocational and academic qualifications, Technical Levels (T Levels), traineeships and employment with training. This review focuses on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers of 16–19 provision, wherever that occurs.

The quality of an education system is fundamentally tied to the quality of its teachers (Barber and Mourshed, 2007; Elliot and Campbell 2013) and research suggests that well-structured and appropriately organised CPD can drive meaningful changes in teachers' practice, lead to organisational improvements, and result in significant gains in student achievement (Fletcher-Wood and Zuccollo, 2020; Kennedy, 2014; Pedder and Opfer, 2010). CPD has been found to have significant benefits for teachers in relation to maintaining currency of their subject knowledge, sharing good practice, and providing opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and future progression (Bartleton, 2018). Furthermore, initial teacher education (ITE) alone cannot equip educators with all the skills and knowledge necessary for a lifelong career, particularly in times of rapid change (Duncombe and Armour, 2004). To be effective, teachers must engage in CPD throughout their careers to hone their practice and remain cognisant of new developments in learning theory, pedagogical approaches, learning technologies, and changes in sector policy (Goldhawk and Waller, 2023). Additionally, technological advancements combined with modern social, environmental, and economic challenges mean that students need to learn increasingly complex skills, including critical thinking, effective communication, and collaboration and complex problem-solving (Darling-Hammond *et al.,* 2017; Ventista and Brown, 2023), creating the need for new skills and innovative approaches to teaching. Consequently, teachers need effective professional development (PD) to learn and refine the pedagogical approaches needed to teach these skills effectively (Darling-Hammond *et al.,* 2017) so that their students are empowered to navigate and succeed in an increasingly complex world.

Support for teachers' professional learning not only enhances teaching practice and subject knowledge but can lead to increased job satisfaction and improved teacher retention and development (Totterdell *et al.,* 2004; Tyler *et al.,* 2024). Research suggests that engagement with CPD is positively linked to employees' intentions to remain in their current organisation (Patrick *et al.,* 2010; Shanks *et al.,* 2012; Stiehl *et al.,* 2020; Tyler *et al.,* 2024). The education sector is facing a teacher recruitment and retention crisis (DfE 2021 FE workforce analysis; NFER 2025; Tyler *et al.,* 2024). Research indicates that heavy workloads that contribute to stress and exhaustion, and limited opportunities for professional growth and development are significant factors contributing to teacher attrition (Smith and Husband, 2024). Therefore, in addition to enhancing teaching quality and benefiting students, effective CPD can also play a crucial role in boosting teacher morale and improving retention, making it perhaps more important than ever to ensure that teachers can access effective CPD.

1.2 Defining CPD

There are many definitions of CPD (Sims *et al.,* 2021), and this is reflected in the literature and variations in the terminology that theorises it: professional learning; PD; PD and learning; professional growth; and teacher learning (Loy, 2024). The 'conceptual vagueness' (Coffield, 2000, p. 3) that for decades has characterised discourses of CPD and the lack of consistent terminology to describe it adds to difficulties understanding and assessing its effects (Porritt, 2014). CPD is a highly complex intellectual and emotional endeavour, fundamentally aimed at enhancing teaching, learning, and achievement across diverse educational settings, each with its own unique challenges (Bartleton, 2018). Evans (2019) defines it as a process that serves the needs of teachers, while Kennedy (2014) distinguishes between CPD that develops teachers' pedagogy and CPD that aligns with organisational goals relating to policy. Sims *et al.* (2021) define CPD as 'structured, facilitated activity for teachers intended to increase their teaching ability' (ibid, p. 7). This review adopts a broader scope, encompassing ongoing, intentional learning undertaken by teachers to improve their professional practice and enhance learner outcomes. CPD activities may include subject-specific activities, an annual CPD programme featuring a range of events, action research initiatives, peer review, or structured programmes with designated learning time, support

mechanisms, and measurable outcomes. It is important to note that there are also some organisations that provide access to resources for teachers to share, and a space for teachers to collaborate online. However, while these resources offer guidance in the form of ready-made teaching strategies, and could be incorporated into a CPD programme, they do not, on their own, fit the definition of CPD used in this review and are therefore, not included here.

1.3 Conceptual framework

Sims *et al.* (2021) developed a practical, evidence-informed framework for understanding and designing effective CPD by analysing how behaviour change occurs as a result of CPD activities. Central to this framework are causally active components, known as mechanisms, which work in combination to develop teacher insights, motivate change, develop new techniques, and embed these into teaching practice (see Table 1.1 below). This framework is well-suited for a practice review of CPD in the post-16 sector, as it shifts the focus from surface-level activities to the underlying mechanisms and processes that make CPD effective. Its emphasis on sustained, collaborative, and reflective learning aligns with the complexity and diversity of post-16 CPD, while its flexibility and focus on impact mean it can be applied across various settings.

Table 1.1: 14 Mechanisms coding frame with examples from Sims *et al.* (2021)

Theme	Mechanism	Intended outcome	Example of mechanism (developed as coding guidance for this review)
Instil insight	1. Manage cognitive load 2. Revisit material	To help a teacher gain a new, evidence-based understanding of teaching, their students, or themselves	1. Focus only on most relevant content 2. Revisit previous topics/techniques later to support lasting learning
Motivate goals	3. Goal setting 4. Credible source 5. Praise/reinforce	To encourage a teacher to adopt a behaviour in order to achieve specific, conscious aim	3. Set or agree on a goal defined in terms of the behaviour to be achieved e.g. incorporate action learning in lessons 4. Present verbal or visual communication from a credible source in favour of or against the behaviour e.g. research or expert in field 5. Verbal or non-verbal reward if there has been effort and/or progress in performing the behaviour
Teaching techniques	6. Instruction 7. Practical social support (peer support) 8. Feedback 9. Modelling (developing new techniques) 10. Rehearsal 11. Prompts/cues	To help a teacher master a new teaching practice through various means, such as instruction, modelling, or peer support	6. Advice on how to perform the behaviour 7. Advise on, arrange, or provide practical help 8. Monitor and provide feedback on the outcome of performance of the behaviour 9. Provide an observable sample of the performance of the behaviour, directly in-person or indirectly, e.g. via film, pictures, for the person to aspire to or imitate 10. Provide opportunities for prompt practice of the behaviour in order to increase habit and skill 11. Introduce or define environmental or social stimulus with the purpose of prompting or cueing the behaviour
Embed practice	12. Action planning (implementation intentions) 13. Self-monitoring 14. Context-specific repetition (embedding practice)	To help a teacher apply a technique/act on an insight/pursue a goal consistently in the classroom	12. Prompt detailed planning of performance of the behaviour 13. Establish a method for the person to monitor and record behaviour as part of a behaviour change strategy 14. Prompt rehearsal and repetition of the behaviour in the same context repeatedly so that the context elicits the behaviour

PD mechanisms are defined as 'entities and activities organized in such a way that they are responsible for the phenomenon' (Illari and Williamson, 2012, p. 14). The phenomenon explored in Sims *et al.'s* (2021) study was improved teaching and learning. Interestingly, while this was similarly a primary aim of CPD for the organisations in this study, some also prioritised improving teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and retention. This broader perspective adds an important dimension to the framework, underscoring CPD's potential to support not only professional growth but also the personal sustainability of the teaching workforce. As such, the framework provides a practical tool for those designing or commissioning CPD, ensuring that it goes beyond knowledge acquisition to foster meaningful, lasting improvements in both teaching practice and educator well-being.

2. Objectives of the review

This practice review analyses current post-16 CPD using Sims *et al.'s* (2021) framework and answers the research questions presented in the next section below.

2.1 Research questions

Output 1:
1. a) What does CPD look like for teachers of post-16 provision?

Secondary research questions:
1. b) How is CPD different for technical teachers, as compared with English and maths teachers,[3] or teachers of other academic subjects?
1. c) Who within the setting is responsible for selecting, or designing CPD programmes?
1. d) What sources of evidence or information on teaching and learning are drawn on when CPD is created in-house?
1. e) How do teachers' and CPD leads' perceptions of CPD compare across post-16 provision?

Output 2:
2. To what extent do existing externally developed CPD programmes conform with the 14 mechanisms for effective CPD, as identified by Sims *et al.* (2021)?
3. To what extent do CPD activities organised within settings/departments conform with the 14 mechanisms for effective CPD, as identified by Sims *et al.* (2021)?

Findings from this review will contribute to the development of recommendations for a forthcoming guidance report on effective CPD in the post-16 sector. The report will be produced independently by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), in collaboration with a panel of post-16 teachers and academics and will draw on both this review and Sims *et al.'s* (2021) systematic analysis of PD. It is intended to complement the existing guidance developed for schools (Collin and Smith, 2021).

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[3] This includes all types of English and maths teachers, from GCSE resit to A-levels.

3.   Methodology

3.1   Overview of the methods

The methodological approach was designed in response to the research questions (see Table 3.1) and adopted a mixed-methods design to provide both breadth and depth in understanding CPD practices across the post-16 sector. For Output 1, data collection focused on two key strands: surveys; and interviews. Surveys with CPD leads and teachers explored current CPD provision and enabled comparison between organisational perspectives and teachers lived experiences, helping to identify potential gaps between setting policy and practice. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with CPD leads from each provider type within scope, to examine in-house provision, and with external CPD providers to explore the wider post-16 CPD offer.

All instruments gathered contextual data, such as setting, subject taught, and qualifications, as well as items aligned with Sims *et al.'s* (2021) framework for effective CPD. This ensured the analysis was grounded in evidence-informed principles and allowed for triangulation across stakeholder groups and provision types.

Output 2 involved a two-stage secondary analysis of existing post-16 CPD programmes to explore their alignment with the 14 evidence-based CPD mechanisms. Stage 1 consisted of a light-touch review of 90 externally developed programmes, providing a broad overview of provision across the sector and helping to identify common features and potential gaps. Stage 2 focused on in-depth analysis of nine CPD programmes, offering more detailed, contextualised insights into how the mechanisms are reflected in practice. These were presented as case studies to illustrate variation in approach and provide examples of implementation across different settings. Together, the two stages offered a balanced perspective by combining sector-wide coverage with closer examination of specific setting-level cases.

3.1.1   Online survey

The evaluation team at Sheffield Hallam University designed an anonymous online survey (see Appendix 1), which took 10–15 minutes to complete. Respondents could optionally provide their email addresses to be contacted about other post-16 activities at the EEF; these emails were removed from the dataset after download and stored separately. The survey, hosted on Qualtrics, included two tailored question sets based on respondents' roles: one for CPD leads responsible for post-16 teacher development; and another for post-16 teachers.

The survey explored CPD in post-16 education from both CPD leads' and teachers' perspectives, using Likert scales, multiple choice, and open-text questions. The CPD lead survey focused on how CPD is planned, structured, and followed up, including sources of evidence informing in-house CPD. The teacher survey examined teachers' perceptions of CPD, types of CPD undertaken, factors affecting its usefulness, and teacher autonomy in selecting CPD. Similar questions in both surveys enabled comparison, though respondents were not necessarily from the same organisations. Consequently, findings reflect broader trends rather than direct correlations between the experiences of CPD leads and teachers within a single setting.

The evaluation team disseminated the survey between December 2024 and January 2025 through professional networks with post-16 settings, schools, and post-16 stakeholders and social media, including LinkedIn. This resulted in 434 responses. After removing incomplete or non-consenting responses, 278 valid responses remained: 97 from CPD leads; and 181 from teachers.

3.1.2   Interviews

To reflect the diversity of post-16 settings and CPD provision, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five CPD providers and CPD leads across four provider types: i) two schools with sixth form provision; ii) two ITPs; iii) four SFCs; and iv) six FE colleges. The focus on FE and SFCs acknowledges their central role in educating the majority of 16–18-year-olds

in England (Association of Colleges [AoC][4]). One CPD provider was interviewed as a focus group to capture multiple stakeholders involved in shaping the CPD offer of this large organisation, reflecting the organisation's scale and influence in the sector. While the small sample limits the generalisability of findings across the entire post-16 sector, the data offer valuable insights into key post-16 contexts. In contrast, findings related to CPD providers are likely to have broader relevance, given the inclusion of major membership organisations and national bodies that also play a central role in delivering CPD within the sector.

Interviews with both CPD providers and leads covered CPD structure, how the focus and content for the CPD offer are identified, and funding of the CPD offer. Provider interviews explored programme range, entry requirements, accreditation, delivery mode, duration, marketing, and uptake. CPD lead interviews focused on how CPD is planned and budgeted for, the key factors considered when identifying CPD topics and how much autonomy teachers of post-16 provision have to select their own CPD activity. Additionally, the CPD lead interviews collected contextual data (size, demographics, region, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills [Ofsted] outcomes) affecting CPD needs. Interviews were conducted online, lasted 30–45 minutes, and were anonymous. Interview schedules can be found in Appendix 2.

The detailed research activities for Output 1 are set out in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: Research activities for Output 1

Activity	Target participants	Research question	Objective
CPD provider interviews	Key sector CPD providers	1a	To understand the range of CPD available to providers, and how CPD is marketed/offered by relevant CPD providers
Online survey	CPD leads	1a, 1c, and 1d	To understand how CPD leads plan and arrange CPD for their staff, including the key factors they consider e.g. content, structure, and follow-up support
Provider interviews: two schools with sixth form provision; four SFCs; two ITPs; six FE colleges—14 in total	CPD leads	1a, 1c, and 1d	To investigate how setting CPD is planned, the key factors to consider, costs of CPD, extent to which teachers decide their own CPD
Online survey	Teachers of post-16 provision	1a, 1b, and1e	To establish the CPD that teachers receive, factors that enhance or inhibit its effectiveness, and their own autonomy in selecting CPD

3.1.3   Output 2: Programme review

Output 2 addressed research questions 2 and 3:

> 2. To what extent do existing externally developed CPD programmes conform with the 14 mechanisms for effective CPD, as identified by Sims *et al.* (2021)?

> 3. To what extent do CPD activities organised within settings/departments conform with the 14 mechanisms for effective CPD, as identified by Sims *et al.* (2021)?

These questions explore the range of CPD opportunities available to post-16 teachers by analysing them using Sims *et al.'s* (2021) 14 mechanisms. Stage 1 (addressing research question 2) involved a light-touch review of 90 externally developed programmes, identified via online searches. Although constrained by limited access to full content due to intellectual

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[4] See: www.aoc.co.uk/policy/education-policy/16-18-new.

property and availability issues, this stage offered a broad overview of sector-wide provision. Stage 2 (addressing research question 3) focused on a more detailed examination of nine CPD programmes, enabling deeper insight into how CPD mechanisms are embedded in everyday practice. This approach offered a balanced and comprehensive perspective, encompassing both formal and informal[5] professional learning. It facilitated a broad mapping of external provider CPD programmes alongside a more in-depth examination of in-house CPD. Given the central role of in-house CPD in the post-16 sector, this analysis yielded valuable insights into effective practice. Selected examples are presented as case studies (see Appendix 3), offering potential models for high-quality CPD design and implementation.

3.2   Sampling and recruitment

3.2.1   Output 1: Surveys and interviews

Participant recruitment for the online survey was supported through collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Society for Education and Training (SET), the Chartered College of Teaching, the EEF, the AoC, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), and the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET). Existing networks with colleges and CPD providers in the post-16 sector were also utilised, and the survey was further disseminated via LinkedIn to maximise reach. Responses were obtained from a diverse range of post-16 provider types across England, ensuring representation from settings within the study's scope. CPD leads who participated were frequently, though not exclusively, those responsible for quality and curriculum, including vice-principals, heads of department, and expert teachers.

CPD providers are the organisations providing CPD to the post-16 sector for different settings and members. CPD providers were selected for interview based on their prominence as leading post-16 PD providers, determined by both the volume of courses they offered, and the specific post-16 provision strands their CPD covered. They included providers of CPD for teachers across all areas of post-16 provision, as well as apprenticeship programmes, SFCs, and ITPs. Providers of CPD catered to maths teachers, including those teaching GCSE and Functional Skills resit maths, as well as educators whose subjects incorporate a significant mathematical component. Participants for the CPD lead interviews were identified via professional networks and were selected to ensure representation from all types of post-16 provider in scope. For sixth form provision in schools, two Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) were recruited following an internet search of MATs with separate post-16 provision. The decision to recruit MATs was made because they typically oversee multiple schools and often have a more strategic focus on post-16 education, particularly when they include several sixth form organisations.

3.2.2   Output 2: Programme review

The 14 mechanisms framework served as the foundation for an online search to identify relevant CPD programmes. In addition to this framework, commonly occurring themes in the current post-16 discourse, such as mental health and well-being, inclusion, assessment, and communities of practice, were incorporated into the search criteria. Additionally, a Google search, using key terms agreed upon with the EEF (see Appendix 4), helped identify a range of CPD programmes for the light-touch analysis. Programmes were also sourced through CPD provider websites and professional networks, including SET, ETF, AoC, the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA), and Centres for Excellence in Maths, as well as articles in FE Week. Further searches were conducted on LinkedIn to expand the dataset.

The scope of the analysis focused on CPD programmes aimed at enhancing teaching and learning for practitioners at all post-qualification career stages. Subject-specific content was excluded, with the exception of English and maths, which were included due to the prominence of GCSE and Functional Skills resit provision within FE policy, and their recognised importance for employment, lifelong learning, and social mobility (DfE, 2014; DfE, 2016; DfE, 2021). In addition, many post-16 educators teach subjects that incorporate substantial mathematical content, such as engineering, construction, finance, and certain T Levels, making maths-focused CPD particularly relevant for strengthening both subject knowledge

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[5] Formal learning has a prescribed structure (learning time or support) with measurable outcomes, is provided by a designated trainer, is intentional from the learner's perspective and leads to a qualification or credit (Eraut, 2000). Informal learning results from daily activities within a particular context (Rogers, 2014), is not structured, and typically does not lead to certification.

and pedagogical approaches. Leadership development programmes were excluded from the review, as were CPD offers from individual external consultants and platforms primarily designed for resource sharing and teacher networking (see section 1.2 above).

The sample for detailed analysis in Stage 2 comprised six in-house programmes from post-16 providers and three externally developed programmes from CPD organisations operating within the sector. Programmes were selected based on the willingness of providers to share detailed programme information. In-house programmes were identified through interviews with CPD leads, which helped to identify settings with well-developed and embedded CPD practices. The analysis in Stage 2 also aimed to understand what was being delivered, identify potential barriers to certain mechanisms, and determine whether some mechanisms were more commonly used than others.

3.3   Analysis

3.3.1   Output 1

3.3.1.1 Survey

The survey data were descriptively analysed using the statistical software SPSS (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). The findings below present both the frequency (n) and percentage (%) of responses for each question. Please note, respondents were not required to answer every question so the total responses per question may vary. Some participants also failed to complete the full survey, so some questions have lower total responses compared to others. Some questions were designed using skip and display logic meaning, some respondents were directed to additional questions based on their response to previous questions. Survey data were analysed by a series of demographic criteria such as respondents' job role and provider type. Survey data from CPD leads and teachers were combined to examine differences and similarities between teachers' perceptions of in-house CPD and those of CPD leads.

In alignment with the CPD lead interviews, survey questions were organised into thematic groups. The first theme focused on contextual information, including setting type, the nature of the CPD offer, and the role held by the CPD lead within their setting. These questions aimed to verify whether the data gathered through interviews aligned with findings from the broader survey of CPD leads.

3.3.1.2 Interviews

Interviews with CPD leads and providers were recorded and transcribed using Teams functionality. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Themes were identified using the interview questions and elements of Sims *et al.'s* (2021) framework (see Interview schedules' section in Appendix 2) and categorised by format, content, and design. Initially, interview data were grouped according to setting type and organised in tables to enable comparisons between similar settings. The data were subsequently organised in tables to facilitate comparisons across all settings and to provide an overview of CPD for post-16 teachers in each type of setting.

3.3.2   Output 2

For Output 2, data were analysed using a structured spreadsheet format, supported by coding guidance and illustrative examples to ensure consistency in interpreting the 14 mechanisms. In the Stage 1 light-touch review, the 90 CPD programmes were distributed among the three researchers responsible for assessing the extent to which each of the 14 mechanisms was evident. When reviewing online information:

- if a mechanism was clearly evident, it was recorded as 'yes';

- if it was unclear but likely present, it was recorded as 'probably yes';

- if it was clearly not evident, it was recorded as 'no';

- if it was unclear, but likely absent, it was recorded as 'probably no'; and

- if there was insufficient information to determine its presence or not, it was recorded as 'not stated'.

To promote consistency across researchers, a standardisation exercise was conducted at the outset. The team analysed the same programme independently and then met to compare interpretations and calibrate their approach before undertaking the full review. During the full analysis, where questions or uncertainties arose, a second researcher independently reviewed the same programme to ensure consistency and enhance the reliability of the findings. Upon completion of the analysis of all 90 programmes, the project lead conducted a review of a 10% sample to further validate consistency and ensure the robustness of the findings.

In Stage 2, a similar process to that used in Stage 1 was followed. However, in this phase, illustrative examples of each mechanism were also documented in a spreadsheet to support analysis and were subsequently developed into case studies presented in Appendix 3.

4.   Findings: Output 1

In this section, we present findings from the online survey with teachers and CPD leads of post-16 provision. The section begins with findings from the teacher survey, followed by findings from the CPD lead survey. For both surveys, we include analysis of differences in each question by type of provider and by job role. The findings below present both the frequency (n) and percentage (%) of responses for each question.

4.1   Teacher survey

The teacher survey mirrored the CPD lead survey, using the same set of questions to explore whether teachers' perceptions of the CPD available to them aligned with those of CPD leads. This section begins with contextual information on the type of post-16 provider in which respondents are employed and their professional roles. It then examines how CPD is organised within their settings, including delivery formats (e.g. face-to-face or online) and the nature of organisational support for participation. Finally, the section explores teachers' perspectives on the usefulness of the CPD they have undertaken over the past 18 months, including the factors that contributed to, or limited, its perceived value.

4.2   Context and role

Teacher respondents were employed across various providers with 35.6% (n=64) working in FE colleges, 27.2% (n=49) in SFCs, and 32.2% (n=58) in schools with sixth form provision. The remaining 5% (n=9) were employed by an ITP or other types of providers (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Teacher employer provider type

What type of provider do you work in?	n	%
FE college	64	35.6
SFC	49	27.2
ITP	4	2.2
School with post-16 provision	58	32.2
Other	5	2.8
Total	180	100

As Table 4.2 below shows, most teacher respondents worked as either academic subject teachers (41.9%, n=75) or vocational subject teachers (33.6%, n=60). The remaining respondents were either English teachers (6.7%, n=12), maths teachers (10.6%, n=19), ITEs (1.1%, n=2), or taught something else (6.1%, n=11).

Table 4.2: Teaching area

What do you teach?	n	%
Academic subject teacher	75	41.9
Vocational / technical subject teacher	60	33.6
ITE	2	1.1
Maths teacher	19	10.6
English teacher	12	6.7
Other (teacher taught something else)	11	6.1
Total	179	100

4.3   Organisation of CPD within settings

Teachers were asked about how CPD is organised within their setting. They indicated a range of ways in which CPD is organised with the most common being through online programmes that staff do in their own time (50.8%, n=92), structured programmes with specified learning outcomes (45.9%, n=83), through coaching/mentoring (42%, n=76), and through peer observations (39.8%, n=72). Figure 4.1 below provides a full breakdown of responses. Please note, Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed).

Figure 4.1: How CPD is organised within post-16 settings
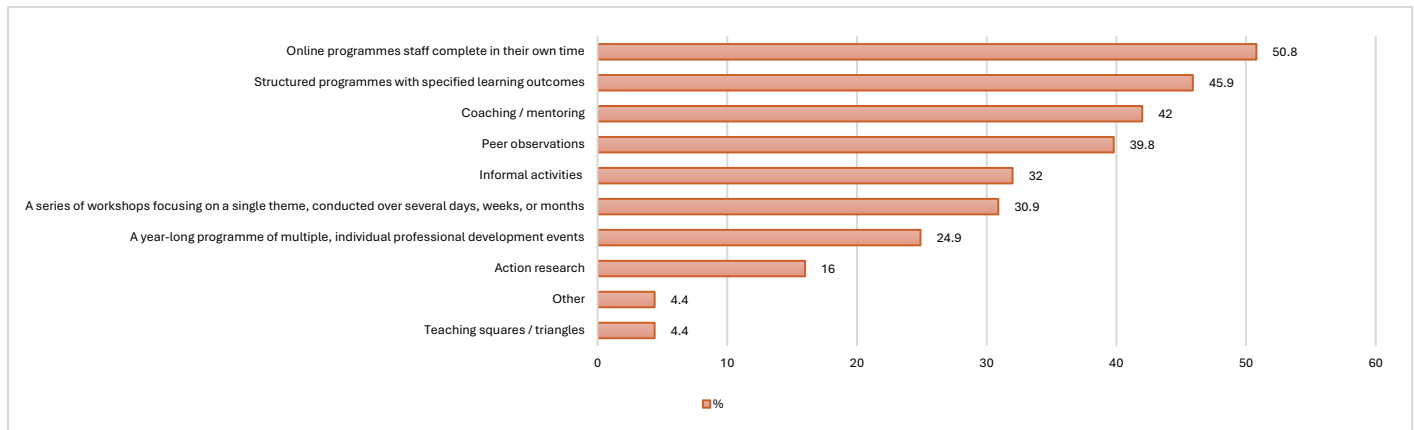
This question was also analysed by the 'provider type' variable (see Figure 4.2 below). Please note, Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed). There were several variables, which had some notable differences between providers. For example, a much greater percentage of SFCs (34.6%, n=17) selected action research compared to schools with sixth form provision (10.3%, n=6) and FE colleges (7.8%, n=5). A year-long programme of multiple, individual PD events was much less common in FE colleges (14%, n=9) compared to SFCs (34.6%, n=17) and schools with sixth form provision (29.3%, n=17). Informal activities were slightly more common in SFCs (40.8%, n=20) compared to FE colleges (29.6%, n=19) and schools with sixth form provision (25.8%, n=15). Peer observations were more common for schools with sixth form provision (48.2%, n=28) compared to FE colleges (32.8%, n=21) and SFCs (38.7%, n=19). Structured programmes with specified learning outcomes were more common in FE colleges (53.1%, n=34) when compared to SFCs (38.7%, n=19) and schools with sixth form provision (41.3%, n=24). Finally, online programmes for staff to complete in their own time was much more common in FE colleges (62.5%, n=40) and SFCs (57.1%, n=28) when compared to schools with sixth form provision (32.7%, n=19).

Figure 4.1: How CPD is organised within post-16 settings analysed by provider type
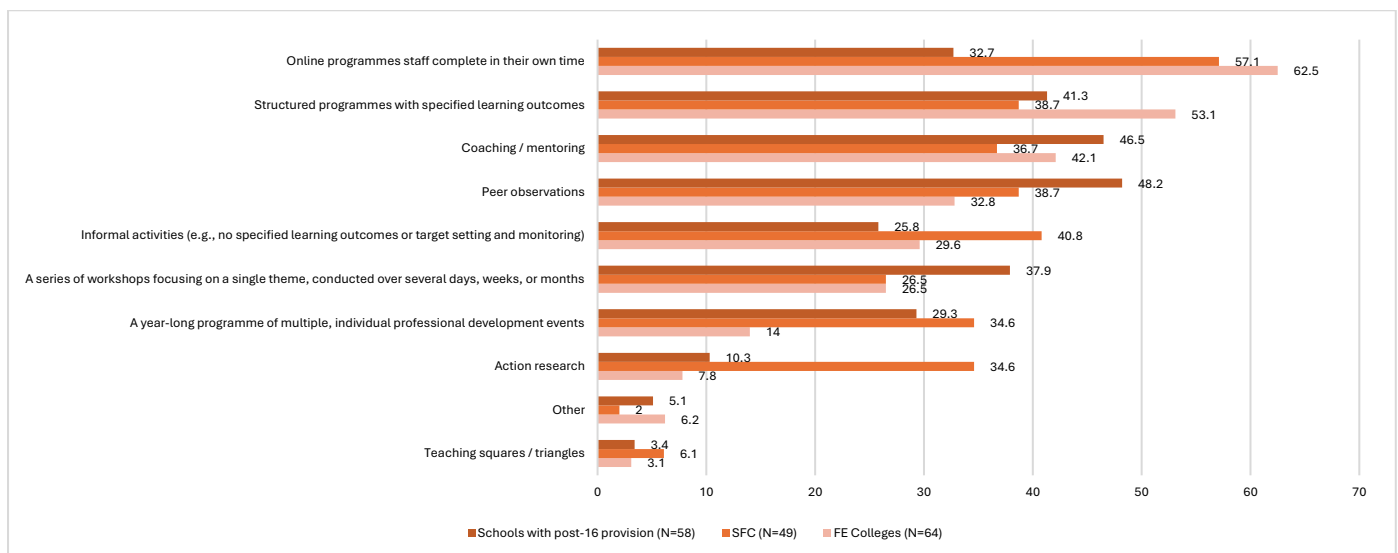
This question was also analysed by teachers' job type (see Figure 4.3 below). Please note, Figure 4.3 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed). The analysis showed some slight differences in scores between different job types. However, it should be noted that teachers categorised in the English and maths category had a much smaller sample when compared to the other job types, which may skew some of the results for the English and maths category. Nonetheless, the analysis revealed that a greater percentage of academic subject teachers (35.2%, n=25) received year-long programmes of multiple, individual CPD events when compared to vocational subject teachers (16.9%, n=10) and English and maths teachers (17.8%, n=5). The analysis also revealed that a greater percentage of vocational subject teachers (57.6%, n=34) received CPD in the form of structured programmes with specified learning outcomes when compared to academic subject teachers (39.4%, n=28) and English and maths teachers (35.7%, n=10).
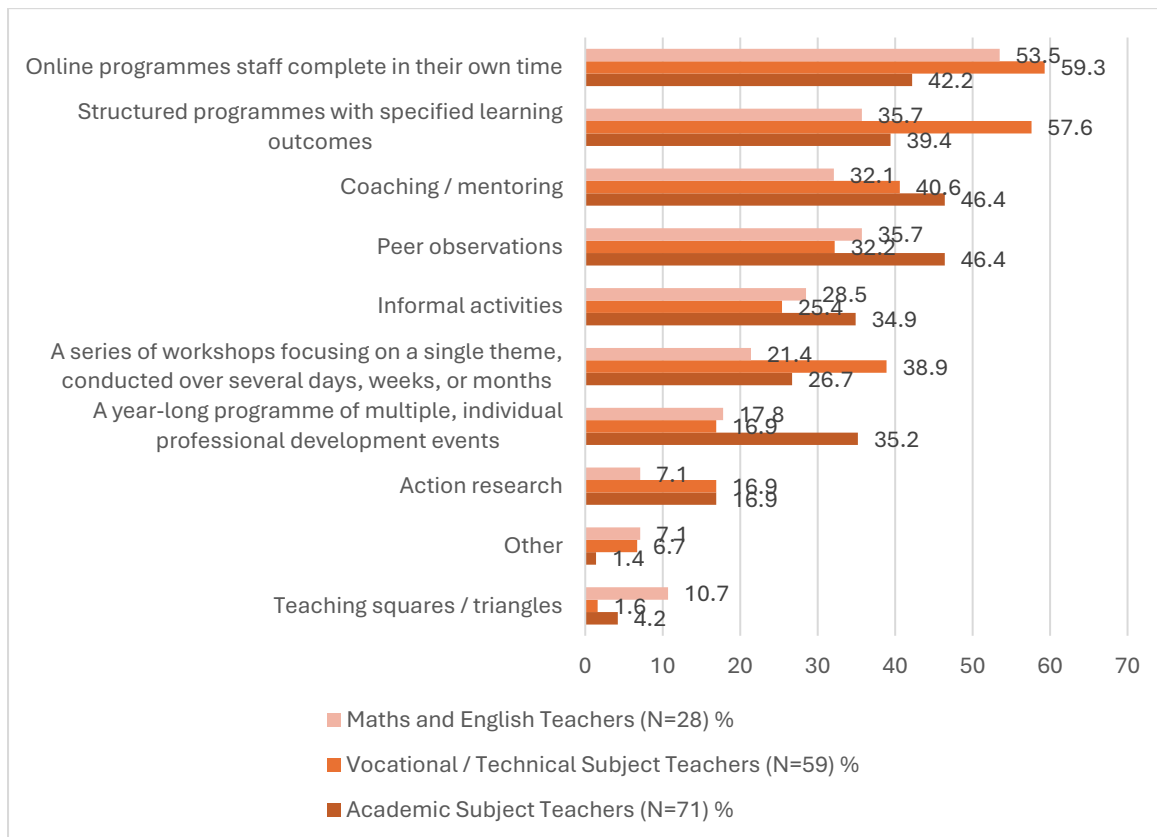
Figure 4.2: How CPD is organised within post-16 settings analysed by job type

When asked to reflect on the past 18 months, teachers said their CPD activities have mostly focused on generic pedagogies (71.8%, n=130), which refer to teaching approaches, strategies, or techniques that are broadly applicable across subjects for example, questioning and active learning. As shown in Figure 4.4 below, fewer teachers indicated that their CPD activities have focused on subject-specific content (13.8%, n=25), personal mental health and well-being (16%, n=29), subject-specific pedagogy (19.9%, n=36), and student mental health and well-being (24.9%, n=45). Figure 4.4 provides a breakdown of CPD focus over the past 18 months.

Figure 4.3: CPD focus over the past 18 months

% of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses allowed)

Category	Value
Generic pedagogies (e.g., assessment, active learning etc.)	71.8
Student mental health and wellbeing	24.9
Subject specific pedagogy	19.9
Personal mental health and wellbeing	16
Subject specific content	13.8
Other	6.6
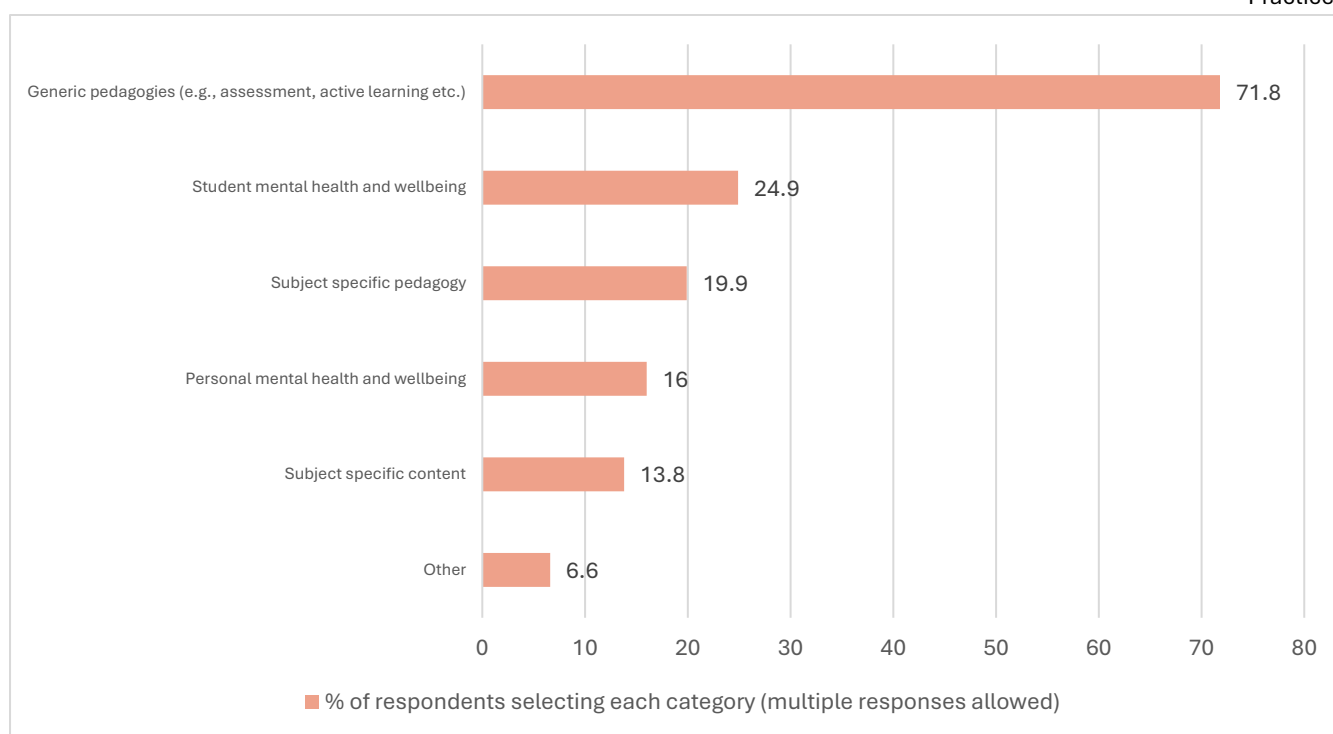
When this question was analysed by provider type there seemed to be a slightly greater percentage of SFCs focusing their CPD on student mental health and well-being (32.6%, n=16) compared to FE colleges (23.4%, n=15) and schools with sixth form provision (20.6%, n=12). There was also a slightly greater focus on subject-specific content in both FE colleges (15.6%, n=10) and schools with sixth form provision (15.5%, n=9) when compared to SFCs (2%, n=1). The remaining options had similar percentages when analysed by provider type.

Further analysis by job type did not reveal any significant differences in responses.

4.4   Support for CPD

In the survey, we were interested to explore whether teachers have the opportunity to choose their own CPD activities, and if so, how they go about selecting them. We found that approximately 66.5% (n=119) of teachers indicated they do have the opportunity to choose their own CPD activities. Moreover, 56.4% (n=66) of these teachers went on to say that they select their CPD activities by researching and requesting the activities they would like to do, while 27.4% (n=32) said they select from an approved list of CPD activities within their organisation. The remaining respondents said they are either directed to specific CPD by their line manager (8.5%, n=10) or they do it independently in their own time and therefore, do not notify their organisation (6.8%, n=8). This is consistent with responses from CPD lead interviews, which show teachers can request individual CPD, although this may or may not be granted, depending on how far the CPD aligns with organisational strategic priorities. CPD leads across several providers also noted that staff are supported in selecting their CPD through appraisal systems and one-to-one meetings with managers, making the process more personalised for each individual.

Analysis of this question by provider type reveals some variation in how teachers choose their own CPD activities. While the most common response across all provider types was 'I research CPD I want to do and request it', this was more prevalent among teachers from schools with sixth form provision (71.4%, n=25) and SFCs (65.7%, n=23) compared to those from FE colleges (42.5%, n=17). Further analysis by job role showed that academic subject teachers were more likely to take this proactive approach (66.6%, n=30) than vocational subject teachers (47.5%, n=19) or English and maths teachers (29.4%, n=9). In contrast, a slightly higher percentage of teachers in FE colleges (32.5%, n=13) reported selecting CPD from an approved list, compared with 22.8% (n=8) of SFC teachers and 20% (n=7) of those in schools with sixth form provision.

When asked about how much time they receive to engage in CPD activities, 67% (n=118) of teachers indicated they do not receive any dedicated amount of time for CPD activity. This appears to contradict the broader finding that in-service education training (INSET) days are held across all settings within scope and may suggest that respondents were instead referring to time allocated for self-directed or individually chosen CPD activities. For those that do get a dedicated amount

of time, 46.2% (n=25) stated this time is allocated per week to engage in CPD. A smaller number of teachers said they get allocated time per month (16.7%, n=9), per term (20.4%, n=11), and per year (16.7%, n=9). These respondents were invited to specify via an open-text box how much time they receive, which is presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Time allocation for CPD (teacher responses)

Time	n
Per week	
Less than one hour	2
one hour	11
two hours	4
three hours	2
Per month	
Less than one hour	1
one hour	2
two hours	4
three hours	2
Per term	
one hour	1
two hours	3
four hours	3
five hours	1
seven hours	1
12 hours	2
Per year	
one day	2
four days	1
eight days	1
seven days	2
14 days	1

Further analysis of this question by provider type indicated that a slightly higher percentage of teachers from FE colleges (43.5%, n=27) reported receiving dedicated time to engage in CPD activities when compared to SFCs (27%, n=14) and schools with sixth form provision (25%, n=13). Unfortunately, due to the small sample size, analysis by provider type and jobs type was not possible when exploring how much time teachers receive for their CPD activities.

The survey next explored whether teachers are required to set targets and draw up an action plan to implement any learning from CPD activities. This question relates to mechanisms 3 and 12 (goal setting and action planning) of the Sims *et al.,* (2021) framework. There was a relatively even split between respondents who said they were required to set targets and draw up an action plan to implement any learning into their practice (53.8%, n=86) compared to those who were not required to do so (46.2%, n=74). When this question was analysed by job type the only notable difference observed was that a slightly greater percentage of vocational subject teachers (60%, n=33) said they draw up an action plan compared to 49.2% (n=32) of academic subject teachers and 52.3% (n=11) of English and maths teachers.

The 86 teachers who said 'yes' to the above question were asked a follow-up question about how this action plan is monitored. The majority, 83.7% (n=72) indicated it was monitored with their line manager, 25.6% (n=22) said they monitor it themselves, and 5.8% (n=5) said they have a coach/mentor who monitors it with them. One respondent said it was monitored in another way but did not specify how. There were no notable differences observed for the questions relating to action planning when analysed by provider type.

The survey next examined the ways in which teachers are supported by their organisation to engage in CPD activities. Approximately 62.4% (n=103) of respondents said they receive financial support from their organisation. These 103 respondents were asked a follow-up question about what form this financial support takes. Please note participants were provided with a list of options to choose from and could select as many options as necessary. The most common forms of financial support included applying for funding to pay for the CPD activity (55.3%, n=57) and receiving full funding for work-related CPD activity (39.8%, n=41). Figure 4.5 below shows a range of additional funding support options, but these were selected by a much lower number of teachers. Figure 4.5 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed).

When the questions around financial support were analysed by provider type and job type there were no notable differences observed.

Figure 4.4: Financial support for teachers to engage in CPD activities
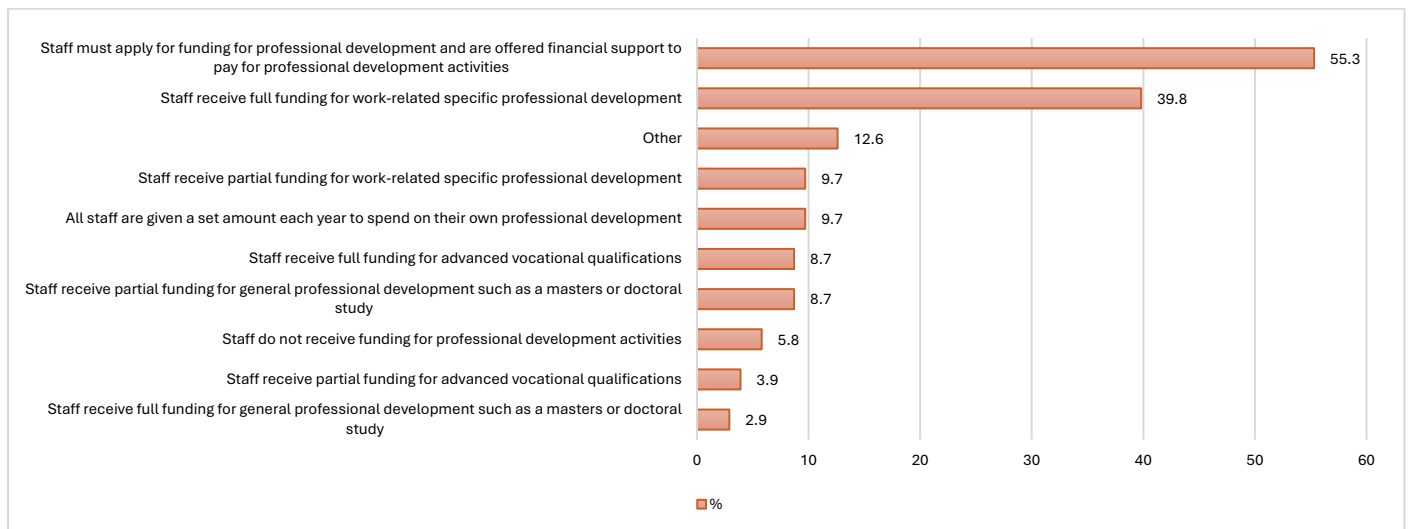
Teachers were also asked other ways in which they are supported by their organisation to implement any learning from CPD activities (see Figure 4.6 below). Please note, Figure 4.6 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed). The most common type of support was through self-monitoring (42.8%, n=68) (mechanism 13) and feedback from their line manager/mentor (42.1%, n=67). As shown in Figure 4.6 below, respondents also indicated they were supported in a variety of other ways, many of which relate to the 14 mechanisms framework (Sims *et al.*, 2021). These include feedback through coaching/mentoring (mechanism 8), practical support through positive reinforcement from their line manager (mechanism 5), goal setting and monitoring (mechanism 3), peer support (mechanism 7), action planning (mechanism 12), and revisiting learning (mechanism 2). Goal setting differs from action planning in that it focuses on defining what is to be achieved, while action planning is concerned with organising and detailing how the goal will be achieved.

Figure 4.5: Other CPD support for staff
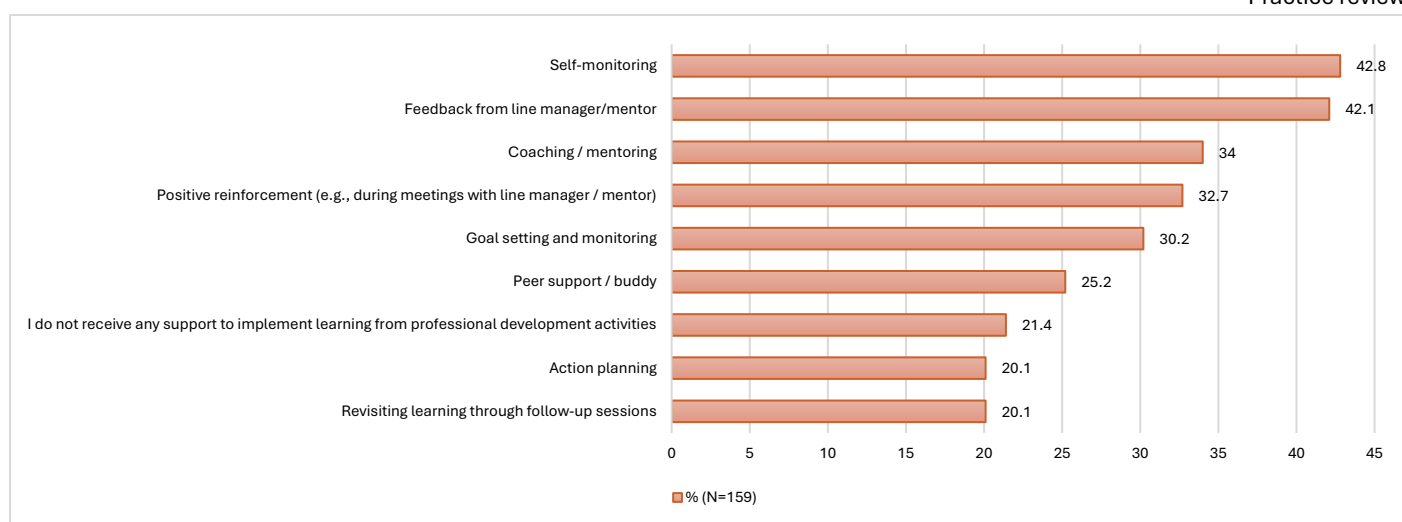
Analysis by provider type revealed slight variations in responses. For example, teachers from FE colleges (40.6%, n=26) were slightly more likely to be supported through coaching/mentoring when compared to teachers from SFCs (16.3%, n=8) and schools with sixth form provision (29.3%, n=17). Similarly, teachers from FE colleges (35.9%, n=20) were slightly more likely to be supported through goal setting and monitoring when compared to teachers from SFCs (22.4%, n=17) and schools with sixth form provision (20.6%, n=6). Lastly, a slightly greater percentage of teachers from FE colleges (42.1%, n=27) and SFCs (46.9%, n=23) were more likely to self-monitor compared to teachers from schools with sixth form provision (24.1%, n=14).

4.5   Usefulness of CPD activities

Teachers were next asked to think more broadly about the CPD activities they have undertaken in their organisation over the past 18 months and to indicate how useful they found them. Around 47.4% (n=74) said they have been either 'quite useful' or 'very useful'. In contrast, 31.4% (n=49) said they have been either 'not very useful' or 'not useful' at all. The remaining respondents said they have been 'neither useful nor not useful' (21.2%, n=33). Figure 4.7 presents an overview of teacher responses regarding the degree to which they have found CPD activities from the past 18 months useful.

Figure 4.6: Degree to which CPD activities in the past 18 months have been useful
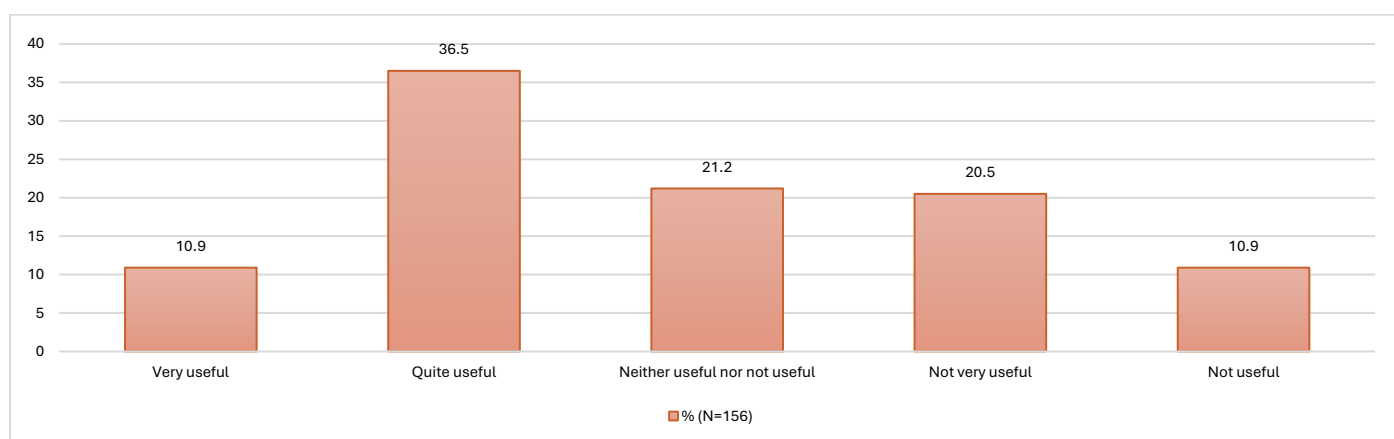
For those that said their CPD activities have been useful (n=74), a range of responses were given as to why it was useful. These are set out in Figure 4.8 below and include helping to build on their current knowledge and teaching skills (75.7%, n=56) and helping to develop teaching techniques in a range of ways (60.8%, n=45). The variety of ways in which the CPD supported the development of teaching techniques provides evidence for nine mechanisms of effective CPD identified by Sims *et al.* (2021): feedback (mechanism 8); modelling (mechanism 9); rehearsal (mechanism 10); practical social/peer support (mechanism 7); credible source (mechanism 4); goal setting (mechanism 3); praise/reinforcement (mechanism 5); action planning (mechanism 12); and self-monitoring (mechanism 13). These responses also align with broader research on teacher professional learning, which highlights that effective CPD should build on teachers' prior knowledge, experience, and expertise (Booth *et al.,* 2021), address their professional learning needs (Goodall *et al.,* 2005), and be perceived as

relevant and applicable to classroom practice (Hustler *et al.,* 2003). Please note, Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9 below show the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed).

Figure 4.7: How CPD activities over the past 18 months have been useful
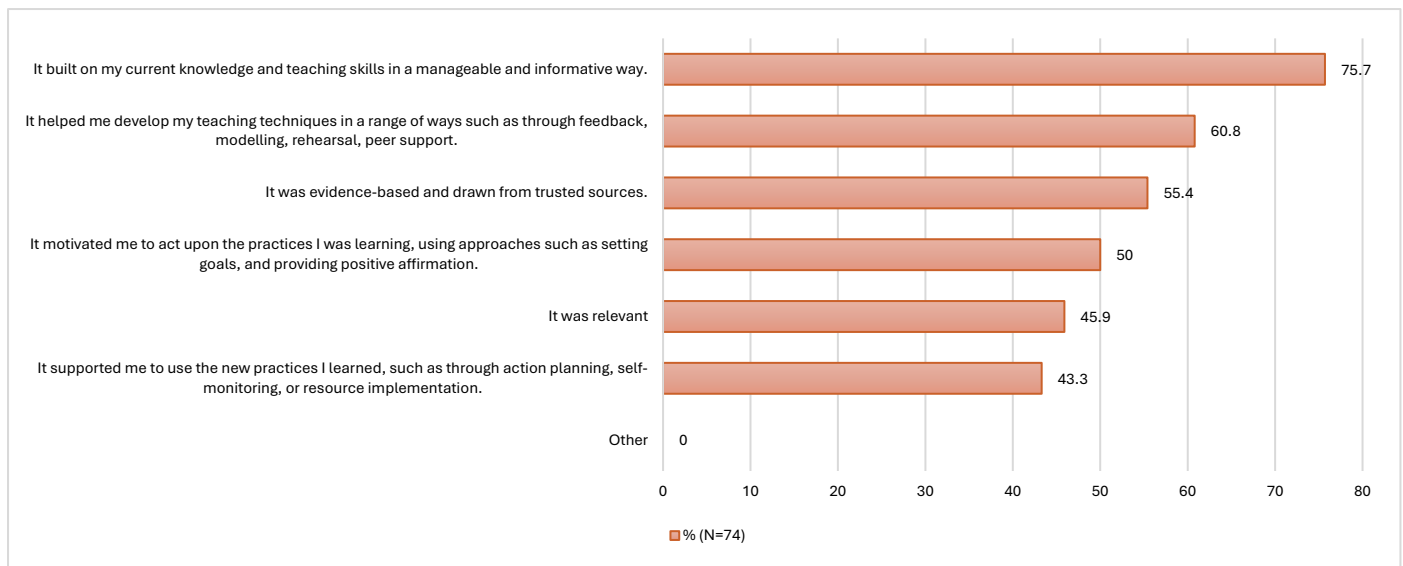
For those that said their CPD activities have not been useful (n=49), a range of responses were given as to why, including that it did not build on their current knowledge and teaching skills (57.1%, n=28), it was not relevant to their teaching (44.8%, n=22), and there was no follow-up support to help implement the learning (40.8%, n=20). Figure 4.9 provides the reasons teachers did not find CPD activities useful. For the questions relating to the usefulness of CPD, there were no notable differences observed when analysing the question by provider type or job type.

Figure 4.8: Why CPD activities over the past 18 months have not been useful
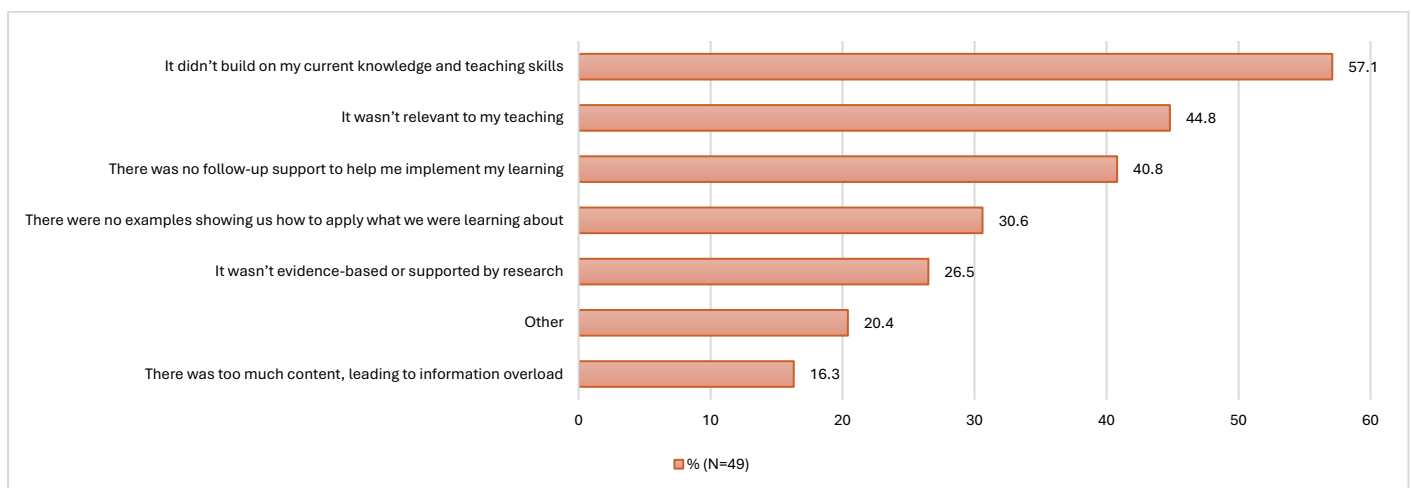
Figure 4.9 highlights the importance of ensuring that teachers are able to connect meaningfully with CPD activities, regardless of their career stage (Schwille, 2016).

4.6   CPD lead survey

The CPD lead survey was designed to triangulate findings from both the CPD lead interviews and the teacher survey. To achieve this, several questions from the CPD lead survey were mirrored in the teacher survey, aligning with key themes explored in the CPD lead interviews. Similar to the teacher survey analysis, the CPD lead survey questions were also analysed by 'provider type' to explore for differences in responses between FE colleges and SFCs. Unfortunately, this analysis only compared responses of CPD leads from FE colleges to SFCs as the sample for CPD leads from schools with

sixth form provision was too small. Also, analysis by 'job type' could not be performed due to the diversity of job roles, which resulted in sample sizes too small to yield reliable insights.

As in the previous section, this part begins by outlining the types of organisations respondents work in and their respective roles. It then explores the structure and content of CPD, including the sources of evidence CPD leads draw on when selecting and designing activities. The report goes on to examine when CPD typically takes place during the academic year and how staff are supported to engage, including the nature of any follow-up provided to support implementation. The section concludes with an overview of how CPD effectiveness is assessed and how these activities are funded.

4.7   Context and role

CPD lead respondents were employed across various providers with 35.1% (n=34) working in FE colleges, 11.3% (n=11) in schools with sixth form provision, and 42.3% (n=41[6]) in SFCs. The remaining 11.3% (n=11) were employed by an ITP or other types of providers. Within these settings, the CPD lead survey respondents reported roles including teaching (23.8%), heads of department and/or course leads (23.7%), teaching and learning coaches (17.5%), and initial teacher educators (15.5%). There is a slight variation in the responses around the job role of the CPD lead, compared to the interview respondents, who were in senior management roles or quality roles within the organisation.
The provider types where respondents are employed are shown in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Provider type where CPD leads are employed

What type of provider do you work in?	n	%
FE college	34	35.1
SFC	41	42.3
ITP	3	3.1
School with sixth form provision	11	11.3
Other	8	8.2
Total	97	100

There was a relatively even split with regard to the role of the respondent within their organisation. This included roles such as quality lead (27.8%, n=27), academic subject teacher (18.6%, n=18), and expert teacher/teaching and learning coach (17.5%, n=17), among others (see Table 4.5 below).

Table 4.5 provides an overview of the roles CPD leads have within their organisation.

Table 4.5: CPD lead role within employer organisation (97 respondents)

What is your role within the organisation? (tick all that apply)	n	%
Academic subject teacher	18	18.6
Vocational / technical subject teacher	5	5.2
Initial teacher educator	14	14.4
Programme leader / head of department	15	15.5
Course leader	8	8.2
Expert teacher / teaching and learning coach	17	17.5

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[6] Please note, this number represents self-selected groupings and more than one leader may have responded to the survey.

| Quality lead | 27 | 27.8 |
| Other | 49 | 50.5 |

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Approximately 62.9% (n=61) of respondents said they were responsible for organising CPD for the whole of their organisation. Around 17.5% (n=17) organised CPD for post-16 provision and 12.4% (n=12) organised CPD for a subject/vocational area. The remaining 7.2% (n=7) said their responsibility was elsewhere.

4.8   Structure and content of CPD

CPD leads were first asked to indicate from a set list of options whether specific CPD activities within their organisation were delivered in-house or by external providers. It was noticeable that all but one of the activities were delivered in-house—the only exception was online programmes that staff complete in their own time in which 57 (58.7%) respondents indicated this was externally delivered compared to 36 (37.1%) respondents who said this activity was developed in-house. The most common CPD activities delivered in-house included peer observations (84.5%, n=82), coaching/mentoring (83.5%, n=81), informal activities (83.5%, n=81), and structured programmes with specific learning outcomes (81.4%, n=79). The most popular externally delivered CPD activities included online programmes that staff complete in their own time (58.7%, n=57), structured programmes with specific learning outcomes (40.2%, n=39), and year-long programmes of multiple individual CPD events (25.7%, n=25). Figure 4.10 below shows the number of respondents who indicated whether their CPD programmes are developed in-house compared with external provider programmes. Respondents could select multiple options.

Figure 4.9: In-house and externally developed CPD programmes (97 respondents)
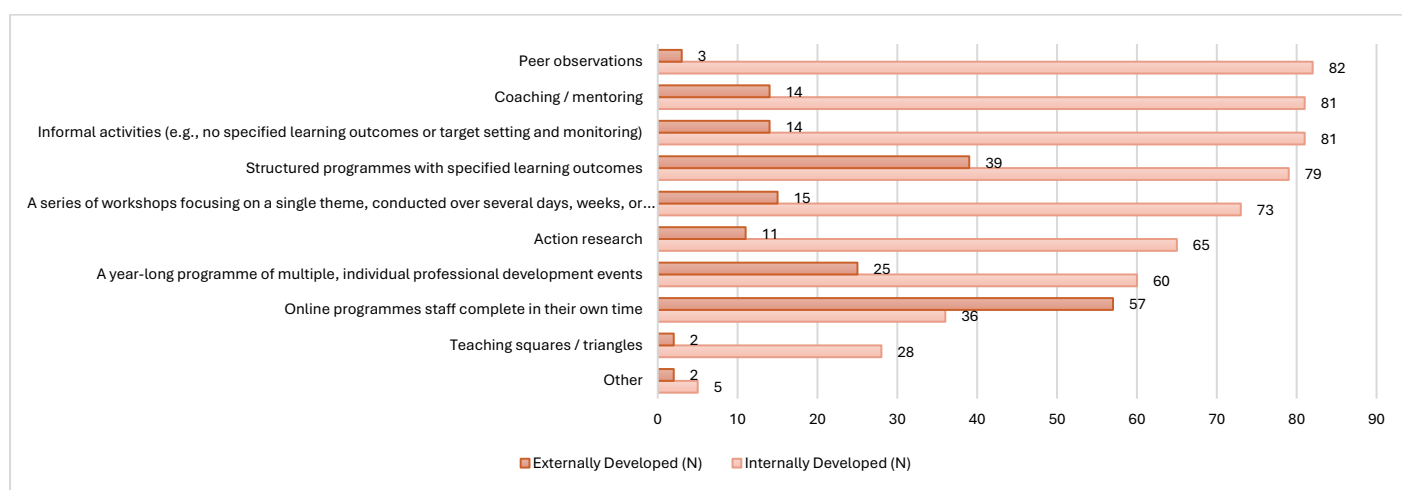
When analysing this question by provider type there were a couple of notable differences between FE colleges and SFCs. For example, a much higher percentage of CPD leads from FE colleges (61.7%, n=21) stated their in-house CPD offer includes online programmes that staff complete in their own time compared to only 17% (n=7) of CPD leads from SFCs. For in-house CPD that involves a series of workshops focusing on a single topic, conducted over several days, weeks or months, a slightly greater percentage of CPD leads from SFCs (85%, n=34) offer this compared to 67.6% (n=23) of CPD leads from FE colleges. However, a greater percentage of CPD leads from FE colleges (32.3%, n=11) offer this from external providers when compared to SFCs (5%, n=2). There were no other notable differences when analysing this question by provider type.

Respondents were next asked to indicate what their organisation's in-house CPD activity has focused on in the past 18 months. Respondents were provided with a list of options and could tick as many options as necessary. The most commonly selected option was generic pedagogies (89.1%, n=82). This is consistent with findings from the interviews with CPD leads in FE colleges and SFCs. The survey responses also indicated a range of additional in-house CPD activities selected by staff, including subject-specific pedagogy (48.9%, n=45), student mental health and well-being (44.6%, n=41), personal mental health and well-being (35.9%, n=33), and subject-specific content (30.4%, n=28). In contrast, none of the CPD leads interviewed identified subject-specific content as a focus area. Instead, CPD leads from most FE colleges and SFCs

highlighted digital skills or AI as key areas of focus, with three FE colleges also including green skills or Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in their CPD provision.

When analysing this question by provider type it became clear that a greater percentage of CPD leads from FE colleges (44.1%, n=15) indicated their organisation's internally developed CPD has focused on subject-specific content when compared to CPD leads from SFCs (17.5%, n=7). It was also clear that a slightly higher percentage of SFCs focused on personal mental health and well-being CPD (40%, n=16) and student mental health and well-being (52.5%, n=21) when compared to FE colleges (32.3%, n=11 and 35.2%, n=12). No other notable differences by provider type were observed for this question.

Further questioning about respondents in-house CPD activity showed that 71.6% (n=63) of respondents indicated their organisation's senior leaders were responsible for designing in-house CPD activities, 67% (n=59) of respondents said expert teachers/teaching and learning coaches, 48.9% (n=43) of respondents said quality leads, and 10.2% (n=9) of respondents said ITEs. Please note, participants could select more than one option. Findings from interviews with CPD leads across all providers were similar, in that senior managers with a 'Quality' remit were responsible for in-house CPD. When analysed by provider type it showed a greater percentage of CPD leads from SFCs (82%, n=33) said the responsibility lies with senior leaders when compared to CPD leads from FE colleges (50%, n=17).

CPD leads were next asked about what sources of evidence they draw on when selecting CPD activities for their teachers of post-16 provision. Again, they were provided with a list of options and could select all that were relevant. The most common sources of evidence included teaching and learning quality assurance processes (89.1%, n=82), student outcomes (73.9%, n=68), and professional body recommendations (72.8%, n=67). This is comparable with findings from interviews with CPD leads, who stated that learning walks and the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) were key sources of evidence when selecting CPD. However, only one CPD lead stated that student outcomes were a factor. Figure 4.11 below presents a range of other sources of evidence that are drawn upon from CPD leads. Please note, Figure 4.11 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed).

Figure 4.10: Sources of evidence CPD leads draw on to select CPD activities
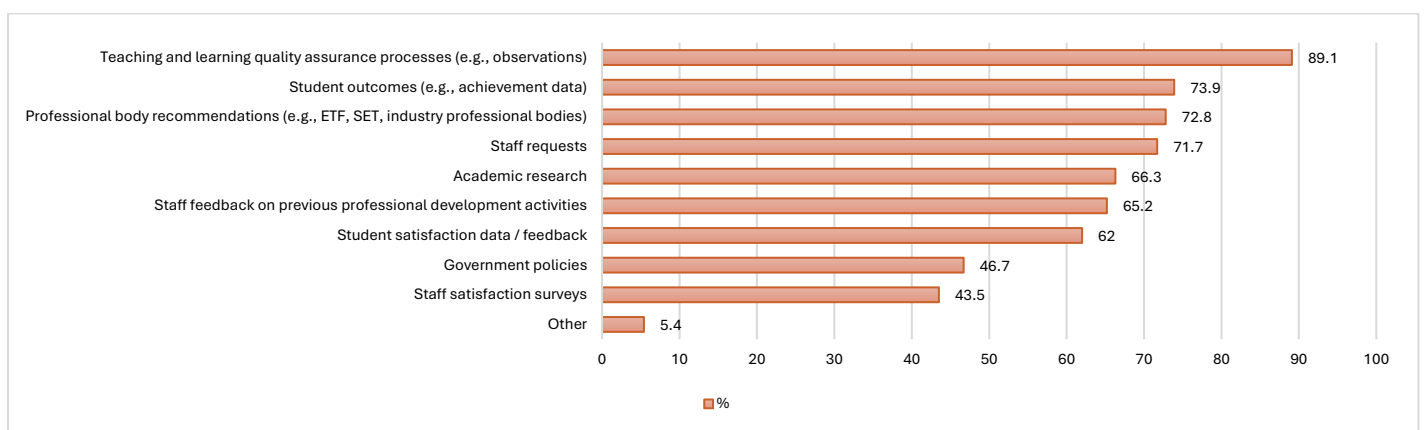
The only notable differences observed when analysing this question by provider type was that a greater percentage of CPD leads from SFCs (75%, n=30) said they draw on academic research when selecting CPD activities for their teachers when compared to CPD leads from FE colleges (52.9%, n=18).

Following CPD activities, respondents indicated that their organisations provide a range of follow-up support as part of the broader CPD offer, many of which align with the 14 mechanisms of effective CPD. Specifically, 66.3% (n=59) stated that they revisit the topic at a later date (mechanism 2), 59.6% (n=59) offer follow-up coaching/mentoring (mechanisms 2 and 8), and 52.8% (n=47) review and set goals (mechanism 3). This contrasts with teacher survey responses where self-monitoring (mechanism 13) and feedback from line managers (mechanism 5) were identified as the most common forms of follow-up support, with coaching/mentoring and review and set goals in third and fifth place, respectively. CPD leads also reported offering peer support (37.1%, n=33) and one-to-one follow-up and review (33.7%, n=30). A small minority (7.9%, n=7) reported not offering any follow-up support, compared with 21.4% (n=34) of teacher survey respondents. Additionally, 4.5% (n=4) of CPD leads indicated they offer other types of support, though they did not specify the nature of this support.

Figure 4.12 below illustrates the range of follow-up support available as part of the wider CPD offer. Please note, Figure 4.12 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed).

Figure 4.11: Follow-up support for staff as part of wider CPD offer
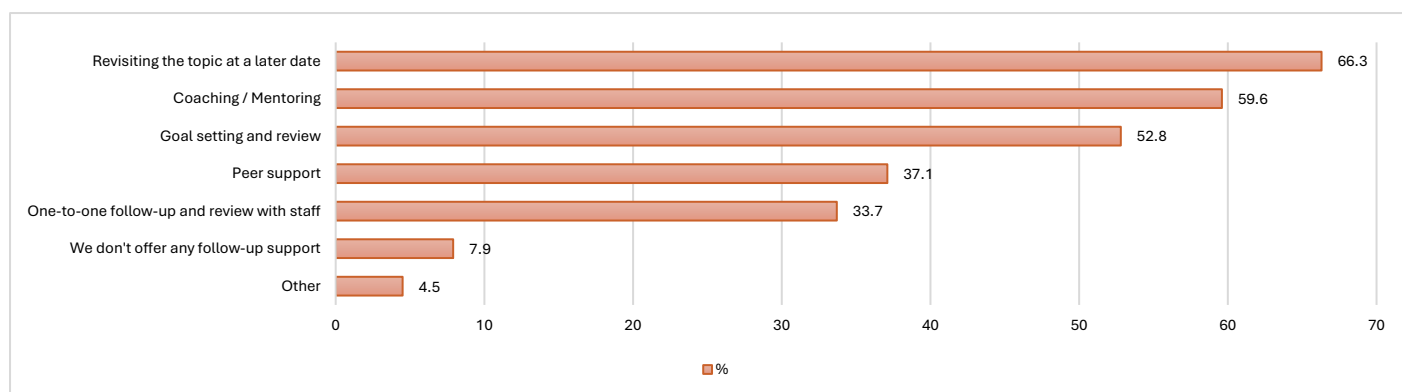
There were no notable differences observed when analysing this question by provider type.

4.9   Timing of CPD

Regarding the timing of CPD across providers, survey data indicate that the majority of whole-provider CPD occurs during INSET days at the beginning and end of terms, a point also reinforced by CPD leads during interviews. However, CPD leads also reported that practitioners are given time for additional CPD activities, such as further academic study, research, or other forms of self-directed learning. A large majority (87.2%, n=75) stated that their staff receive dedicated time to engage in CPD, compared to just 12.8% (n=11) who said they do not. This contrasts sharply with responses from the teacher survey, where 67% (n=118) of teachers indicated they do not receive any dedicated time for CPD beyond formal activities. For those that answered 'yes', they were asked a follow-up question to determine how this time is allocated (see Table 4.6 below). Nearly 30% (n=24) of respondents reported that time is allocated for CPD each week, while 17.3% (n=14) have time set aside each month. Additionally, 24.7% (n=20) indicated each term, and 28.4% (n=23) said time is allocated each year. The most common weekly amount is one hour, while the most common monthly amount is five hours. The typical termly amount is eight hours, and the annual amount is 40 hours. While teacher responses aligned with CPD leads on the weekly amount of time allocated for CPD, their responses for monthly, termly, and annual allocations were significantly lower: two hours monthly; two or four hours termly; and one or seven days annually. Given that time was identified as a significant barrier to CPD in interviews with CPD leads, it is possible that teachers do not perceive themselves as having dedicated time for professional learning outside of institution-organised provision, or are using this time for administrative tasks rather than for CPD.

Table 4.6: Time allocation for CPD (CPD lead responses)

Time	n
Per week	
Less than one hour	3
one hour	12
two hours	6
Per month	
Less than one hour	
one hour	2
two hours	5
three hours	2

Time	n
four hours	1
Per term	
one hour	2
two hours	2
three hours	2
four hours	1
five hours	1
six hours	1
seven hours	1
eight hours	5
12 hours	2
16 hours	1
Per year	
16 hours	4
24 hours	2
30 hours	6
40 hours	7
50 hours	2

When analysing this question by provider type there were no notable differences except for the 'per term' option in which a higher percentage of CPD leads from SFCs (29.7%, n=11) selected this option compared to CPD leads from FE colleges (7.4%, n=2).

The survey next explored whether staff have the opportunity to choose their own CPD activities, beyond any whole-organisation provision. The vast majority of CPD leads (92.8%, n=77) indicated that teaching staff are able to select their own CPD, while only a small proportion (7.2%, n=6) reported that teachers do not have this opportunity. There were no notable differences when analysing this question by provider type.

Those who answered 'yes' were then asked how teaching staff go about selecting CPD activities. Most commonly, 72.7% (n=56) stated that teachers research and request the CPD they would like to undertake. In addition, 55.8% (n=43) said teachers are directed to CPD by their line manager. A smaller proportion, 29.8% (n=23), indicated that teachers select CPD in their own time, and 25.9% (n=20) reported that teachers choose from an approved list of activities. When asked about this in interviews, CPD leads explained that the list referred to a programme of CPD delivered during a whole INSET day, featuring parallel sessions that teachers could choose from, rather than a list of approved CPD options that teachers could engage with independently of in-house events. CPD leads were next asked whether staff are required to set targets and create action plans to support the implementation of learning from CPD activities. A total of 44.4% (n=36) confirmed that staff are required to do so, while 40.7% (n=33) said they are not. The remaining 14.8% (n=12) selected the other option, with responses indicating that implementation is instead monitored through the annual appraisal process or a coaching plan.

Those who indicated that staff draw up action plans were then asked how these plans are monitored. Respondents could select more than one option. The majority (83.3%, n=30) reported that action plans are monitored by the staff member's line manager, while 33.3% (n=12) said the plans are self-monitored. An additional 19.4% (n=7) selected other.

There were no notable differences observed when analysing the above two questions by provider type.

4.10   Support for CPD

When asked more generally about how their organisation supports teachers to undertake CPD activities, 61.3% (n=49) of respondents indicated staff are given dedicated time to undertake CPD activities, 16.2% (n=13) of respondents said staff are given financial support. Similarly, 16.2% (n=13) of respondents selected the other option and 6.3% (n=5) of respondents indicated their staff are not supported to undertake CPD activities. A follow-up question was asked to the 13 respondents who indicated their staff receive financial support. All 13 respondents who said their organisation offers financial support indicated staff must apply for funding for PD and are offered financial support to pay for PD activities. This figure is lower than that reported by CPD leads during interviews, where 43% (6/14) of respondents indicated they provided financial support to enable teachers to engage in CPD. This discrepancy may be due to the smaller number of interviewees compared to survey respondents. Unfortunately, the sample of respondents who indicated that their staff receive financial support was too small to analyse by provider type.

Next, respondents were provided with a list of options and asked to indicate whether their organisation offers this support to help teachers implement their learning from CPD activities. Please note, participants could select more than one option. The most common forms of support were self-monitoring (91.7%, n=66), feedback from line manager (91.5%, n=65) and positive reinforcement (90.3%, n=65). Figure 4.13 below shows the range of additional support options that CPD indicated their organisation offers. Please note, Figure 4.13 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed).

Figure 4.12: Additional support for teachers to undertake CPD activities
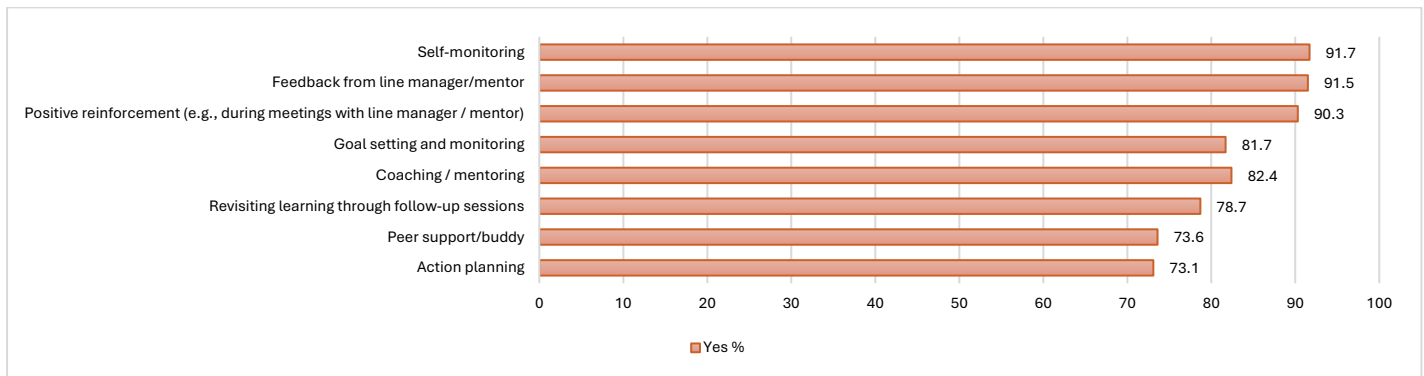
The only notable difference when analysing this question by provider type was that a slightly greater percentage of CPD leads from SFCs (73.5%, n=25) indicated their staff receive peer support when compared to CPD leads from FE colleges (62.5%, n=15). However, the percentage for both FE colleges and SFCs is still relatively high.

4.11   How CPD leads evaluate the usefulness of CPD activities

With regard to evaluation of the usefulness of CPD activities, 88.5% (n=69) of CPD leads indicated they use staff evaluations/feedback forms, 64.1% (n=50) of respondents indicated they observe higher standards of teaching, 65.4% (n=51) of respondents indicated they observe improved student satisfaction with teaching, and 74.4% (n=58) of respondents indicated they observe improved student outcomes.

There were no notable differences when analysing this question by provider type.

4.12   Funding of CPD activities

The final two questions for CPD leads explored their organisation's budget for CPD activities. Just over half of respondents (57.1%, n=44) reported having a defined annual budget for CPD that is held centrally and approved by their team. A smaller proportion (15.6%, n=12) indicated that while their team manages a budget for whole-organisation activities, individual departments also hold their own CPD budgets. Meanwhile, 11.7% (n=9) stated that their organisation does not have a defined CPD budget. There were no notable differences when analysing this question by provider type. Figure 4.14 below provides a full breakdown of responses.

Figure 4.13: How CPD activities are funded
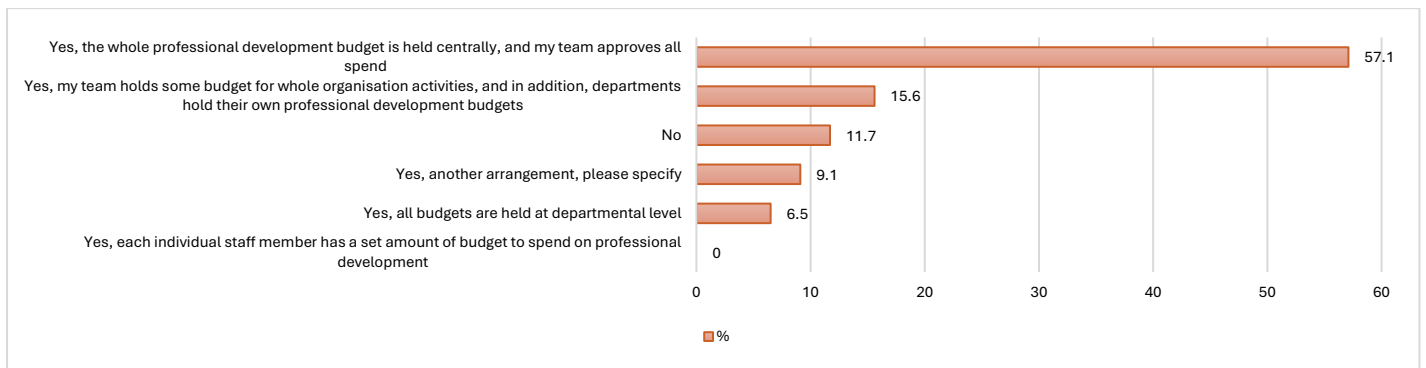
5. CPD lead and teacher comparisons

5.1 Focus of CPD during past 18 months

Both CPD leads and teachers were asked what the focus of their organisation's in-house developed CPD activities has been over the past 18 months. The most common activity was generic pedagogies (CPD leads: 89.1%, n=82; teachers: 71.8%, n=130). The remaining six options were selected by a higher percentage of CPD leads when compared to teachers. Although the CPD leads and teachers who responded to this question were not necessarily from the same organisation, this trend in the data may indicate that teachers are not fully aware of the CPD offer in their organisation. Figure 5.1 below compares the views of CPD leads and teachers on CPD focus in the past 18 months. Please note, Figure 5.1, Figure 5.2, and Figure 5.3 show the percentage of respondents selecting each category (multiple responses were allowed).

Figure 5.1: Comparison of CPD lead and teacher view of CPD focus in past 18 months
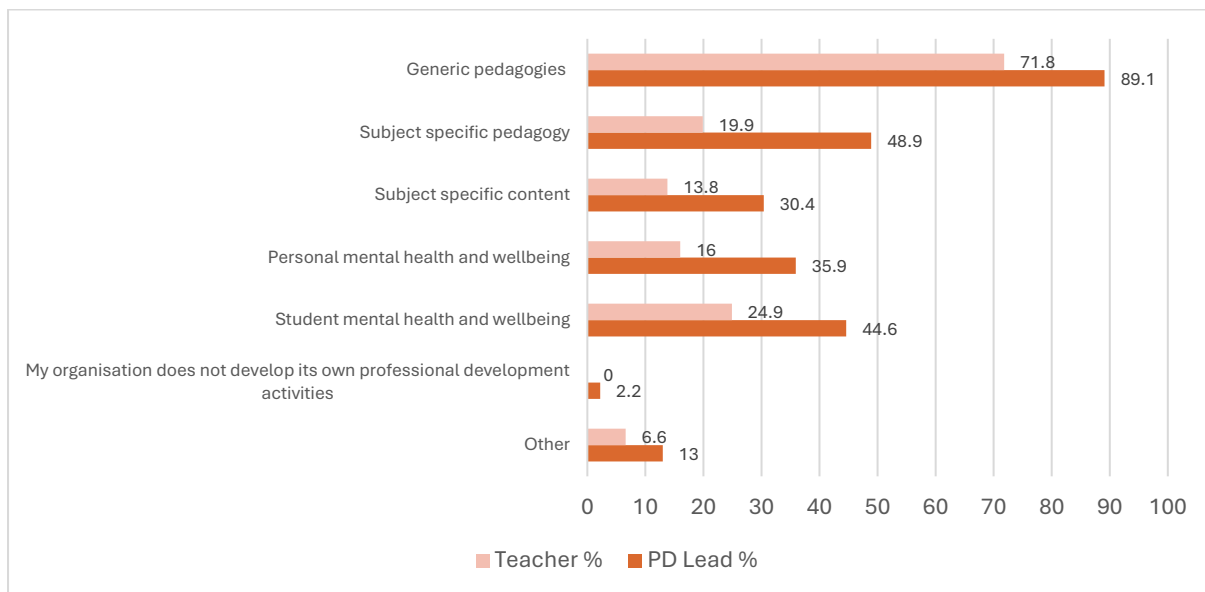
5.1.1 How teaching staff select CPD

This theme reviewed the way in which teachers chose their CPD activities in comparison with what we had been told by CPD leads. Interestingly, a greater percentage of CPD leads (55.8%, n=43) reported that staff are directed to CPD activities by their line manager, compared to teachers (8.5%, n=10). A similar trend was observed for the option staff do this independently in their own time (CPD leads: 29.8%, n=23; teachers: 6.8%, n=8). Figure 5.2 below compares the views of CPD leads and teachers on how teaching staff select CPD.

Figure 5.2: How teaching staff select CPD

Figure 5.2 (bar chart)

Staff do this independently in their own time — Teacher %: 6.8, PD Lead %: 29.8
Staff research professional development they want to do and request it — Teacher %: 56.4, PD Lead %: 72.7
Staff are directed to specific professional development by their line manager — Teacher %: 8.5, PD Lead %: 55.8
Staff select from an approved list — Teacher %: 27.4, PD Lead %: 25.9
I don't know — 0
Other — 0.9

■ Teacher %   ■ PD Lead %

5.1.2   Support for CPD

Both CPD leads and teachers were asked to indicate what support staff receive to implement their learning from CPD activities. As shown in Figure 5.3 below, all eight options were selected by a greater percentage of CPD leads when compared to teachers, with the most common being self-monitoring (CPD leads: 91.7%, n=66; teachers: 42.8%, n=68) (mechanism 13) and feedback from line manager (CPD leads: 91.5%, n=65, teachers: 42.1%, n=67) (mechanism 8).

Figure 5.3: Support for CPD (*ᵃBetween 67 and 75 CPD lead respondents, 159 teacher respondents).*

Self-monitoring — Teacher %: 42.8, PD Lead %: 91.7
Feedback from line manager/mentor — Teacher %: 42.1, PD Lead %: 91.5
Positive reinforcement (e.g., during meetings with line manager / mentor) — Teacher %: 32.7, PD Lead %: 90.3
Goal setting and monitoring — Teacher %: 30.2, PD Lead %: 81.7
Coaching / mentoring — Teacher %: 34, PD Lead %: 82.4
Revisiting learning through follow-up sessions — Teacher %: 20.1, PD Lead %: 78.7
Peer support/buddy — Teacher %: 25.2, PD Lead %: 73.6
Action planning — Teacher %: 20.1, PD Lead %: 73.1

■ Teacher %   ■ PD Lead %

5.2   Output 1: CPD provider interviews

This section investigates the format, content design, and delivery of CPD, how CPD provider programmes are funded and marketed, and take-up of CPD programmes by the sector. CPD providers were selected for interview based on their prominence as leading providers of post-16 PD. This selection included the largest providers offering a broad range of general and specialised CPD programmes for post-16 teachers, covering areas such as apprenticeships and T Levels. It also encompassed providers delivering CPD tailored to specific post-16 settings, including ITPs and SFCs, as well as those specialising in subject-specific CPD, particularly in areas such as maths and English. The findings are summarised below, with more detail in the narrative that follows.

5.2.1 Key findings

- Most CPD providers offer a mix of face-to-face and online formats. Face-to-face CPD is in the form of conferences, or localised training. There are also online networks or Special Interest Groups (SIGs) for resource sharing and peer support.

- CPD is delivered by commissioned external experts and informed by research.

- Most CPD is non-accredited; optional accredited options like qualified teacher learning and skills (QTLS) or Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) are available. Career development is not the main focus, but some providers support teacher progression.

- CPD can range from single sessions lasting 60 minutes to multiple sessions over one year. Webinars typically last one to two hours and focus on a single topic.

- Two CPD providers are primarily government-funded, the others rely on membership or course fees. Members pay lower fees than non-members, though membership itself may be costly. Access to accredited CPD may incur additional charges.

- Marketing channels include newsletters, websites, social media, regional teams, and customer experience teams for outreach.

5.2.2 CPD format

Table 5.1 below shows that most of the CPD providers interviewed offer a range of types of CPD in a range of formats, including face-to-face and online delivery. However, only one of the providers offers asynchronous CPD that is not a webinar. Many of the face-to-face sessions include an asynchronous component as preparation for the face-to-face sessions. Online synchronous sessions include webinars and Microsoft Teams/Zoom sessions, with PowerPoint presentations and recordings of live online sessions made available online afterwards for participants to revisit at their own convenience. In addition, all CPD providers host at least one conference per year and offer face-to-face in-house training and INSET days. For one CPD provider, the conferences are hybrid to make them more accessible. Interestingly, all but one CPD provider includes blogs as a form of CPD. It is important to note that while blogs may not always meet the formal criteria of CPD (e.g. structured sessions, and learning objectives), they can offer valuable opportunities for professional learning by encouraging teachers to research new teaching strategies, reflect on their practice, and stay up to date with the latest trends, teaching methods, and evidence-based practices.

Table 5.1: Format of CPD provider CPD offer

CPD providers	Blog	Research network / SIG / forum	Webinar	Conference	Online asynchronous	Online synchronous	Face-to-face workshops
1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	X	X	X	X		X	
3	X	X	X	X		X	X
4	X	X	X	X		X	X
5			X	X		X	X

CPD in the form of provider hubs and practitioner research communities are run by members as a means of promoting and sharing good practice across the sector. Four of the five CPD providers (1, 2, 3, and 4) host online networks or SIGs. These are designed to be online spaces where members can interact with each other, share resources, and disseminate their research. CPD provider 4 describes this as *'expert hub(s) for a specialism'* where members share resources and offer mentoring support to less experienced colleagues. For the members who actively contribute, these hubs also serve to reinforce and validate their professional reputation within the sector:

We create that partnership link up. So, we do a lot of buddying and mentoring work in the sector...Providers love hearing from other providers and learning from others they've got that credibility in the sector. (CPD provider 4)

Face-to-face CPD events are offered by four CPD providers (1, 3, 4, and 5) and include courses available for member booking, conferences, and, in two cases (CPD providers 1 and 5), bespoke in-house training. These sessions may be delivered locally or at a central location, with some that can also be 'bought in' by settings. Notably, one provider (CPD provider 5) offers multiple INSET days throughout the year.

5.2.3   Content, design, and delivery

Interviews and focus groups with CPD providers also probed the factors CPD providers consider when designing post-16 CPD, including programme content, who designs and delivers the CPD programmes, and their duration.

All CPD providers reported adopting a bottom-up approach to designing their CPD programmes, driven by an analysis of sector needs and demand. They identify these needs through various methods, including member surveys (CPD providers 1, 2, and 3), teacher advisory groups (CPD provider 1), and feedback gathered at the conclusion of webinars or CPD sessions (CPD providers 4 and 5). In the early stages of developing their CPD offer, CPD provider 5 conducted focus groups with teachers and heads of department from a range of post-16 settings. By identifying common areas across these discussions, they were able to design a flexible CPD menu that allows organisations to build tailored CPD events aligned with both their teachers' PD needs and their strategic priorities. Elements of the CPD menu vary in length (90 mins, half-day, or full day) and include topics such as using ratio tables, using manipulatives, problem-solving, responsive teaching, or a combination of 90- and 180-minute sessions for a full day of CPD. This CPD provider now also uses feedback from CPD events to inform future CPD topics. CPD provider 1 cited Ofsted reports as a means of identifying sector strengths and areas for developments as a factor for CPD decisions. They also stated that commissioned work by the Department for Education (DfE) and government policy are key drivers of their CPD offer. CPD for teachers of T Levels is one example of this. The only accredited programme identified was the conferment of QTLS after professional formation. However, this CPD provider also gave the option to undertake accredited ILM for an additional charge.

All CPD providers interviewed reported that their CPD programmes are not specifically aligned to career development, but rather *'Everything...is more about making...things better in the classroom'* (CPD provider 5). However, three CPD providers (1, 3, and 5) stated that they align some of their CPD offer to support career progression with programmes for new teachers, expert or advanced teachers, and managers within the sector. One CPD provider also offers programmes that aim to help teachers become more effective, for example QTLS status, and Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) offer, and workshops and webinars helping teachers develop specific skills and knowledge, such as contextualising English and maths. CPD provider 5 offers courses specifically for new leaders or aspiring leaders who want to lead maths in FE, but who may not have a maths background.

The content, design, and delivery of the CPD offer is from a variety of sources, mainly external delivery partners and external consultants with the required expertise and is explicitly grounded in varied types of research such as the ONSIDE (Offline, Non-judgemental, Supportive, Individualised, Developmental, Empowering) approach to mentoring (Hobson, 2020) and growth mindset (Dweck, 1999). CPD provider 1 integrates established frameworks into its procurement process to ensure that externally developed CPD is created and delivered by subject matter experts, promotes inclusion and sustainability, and targets impactful outcomes for the FE sector. The entire CPD team of provider 5 have extensive experience as FE teachers, which they draw on to design and deliver CPD programmes that are relevant and applicable. For them, the driving principle behind CPD design is *'authenticity and empathy (which) permeates everything that we're doing with this programme'* (CPD provider 5). Within all CPD provider organisations, a designated person is responsible for quality assuring the CPD offer. This process often involves adherence to formal standards, such as the Gatsby benchmarks (The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2024), or a set of CPD principles that all programmes must meet.

Time commitments for CPD programmes vary considerably, ranging from 60 minutes to six months. Some programmes comprise multiple sessions, while others involve full-day events. CPD provider 5, which offers longer programmes over six months, explained that these follow a structure of delivered sessions with tasks for participants to complete in between to

encourage application of learning and reflection. This approach creates *'a coherent thread'* (CPD provider 5) throughout the programme, rather than disparate elements, and aligns with mechanisms 1 and 10 (managing cognitive load and rehearsal) from Sims *et al.'s* (2021) framework. All CPD providers organise conferences, with CPD providers 1, 3, and 4 hosting one-day events; CPD provider 2 offering a two-day conference; and CPD provider 5 delivering a three-day conference. These events provide delegates with opportunities to attend multiple workshops on diverse topics and to network. Webinars are typically scheduled for one to two hours to reduce screen fatigue; as a result, their content focuses on a single topic and offers limited networking opportunities.

5.2.4   Funding of CPD provider programmes

While government and other public funding organisations support much of the post-16 CPD provision for two of the CPD providers, others primarily fund their offerings through member contributions. Acknowledging that some sector salaries have not kept pace with inflation, all CPD providers strive to keep fees low, viewing CPD as *'a way of keeping people excited'* (CPD provider 1). Where fees are charged, they tend to be *'nominal...to cover costs'* (CPD provider 3). However, a pricing hierarchy exists among CPD providers, with non-members paying significantly more for programmes than members. Even when CPD opportunities are free to members, where membership fees are substantial, they can still present a significant barrier. Consequently, despite the availability of free programmes, access to CPD may remain constrained by financial considerations.

A significant portion of CPD is offered free of charge by CPD providers 1 and 5. The fully funded programmes typically address specific government-driven issues within the post-16 sector, such as CPD for teachers of English and maths resits. Notably, all of CPD provider 5's CPD programmes are fully funded for organisations delivering 16–19 study programmes. Across all providers, most CPD offerings are unaccredited, although in some instances, participants can pay extra to gain an accredited qualification.

5.2.5   Marketing and take-up

Across the provider group, newsletters are the most commonly used marketing tool, particularly for membership organisations. These often include not only updates on CPD opportunities but also broader policy developments, which providers believe increases their likelihood of being read. Social media platforms and provider websites are also key marketing tools. CPD provider 1, which is the largest, uses regional teams to serve as the key contact for post-16 providers, fulfilling both support and customer service functions. They also keep a database of previous participants and employ 'customer experience teams', which they use to market their CPD offer. In contrast, CPD provider 5 does not use a membership model, and does not formally market their CPD offer. Instead, it relies on reputation and word of mouth, stating that *'our marketing strategy is our reputation'* (CPD provider 5).

All CPD providers interviewed found it challenging to define a typical participant, as engagement varied depending on the nature of the offer. However, two providers noted that general FE colleges tend to be the most frequent participants, followed by land-based colleges, schools sixth form provision, and SFCs. Interestingly, CPD provider 3 observed lower levels of engagement among more affluent SFCs in the South of England, which they attributed to slightly lower per capita funding, linked to lower levels of student need, and partly to these colleges having established their own CPD networks, reducing reliance on external provision. Conversely, they also highlighted difficulties in engaging SFCs in more economically deprived areas, where teachers are often preoccupied with immediate operational challenges: *'firefighting'*, as CPD provider 3 described it.

Timing within the academic calendar also significantly influences CPD uptake. For instance, CPD provider 5 reported that revision-focused CPD is particularly popular in February and March, while more strategic CPD, such as collaborative planning and curriculum sequencing, are better attended in June, when teachers are more able to focus on long-term development. In contrast, engagement tends to drop during exam periods, when teachers have less capacity to participate in professional learning.

5.3   Output 1: CPD lead interviews

All interviewed CPD leads held senior management roles, typically as principals or assistant principals, and were associated with either the Quality or Human Resources (HR) departments, often serving as CPD lead for pedagogy or teaching quality. The MAT CPD leads were also Ofsted inspectors. Interview questions were organised into four key themes, with the first theme exploring the organisational context, the CPD lead's role, and the initial qualifications or requirements for staff working within the setting.

Given the diversity of the post-16 sector and the wide range of learners it serves, contextual information is essential for understanding how CPD is organised to ensure its relevance for post-16 teachers. These settings support students from varied socio-economic and regional backgrounds, which in turn shapes distinct CPD priorities. The following section presents contextual and demographic information from the participating post-16 settings, including the last Ofsted outcome. This information was obtained by publicly available sources when not provided by the settings themselves. Findings are organised by setting type: FE colleges; SFCs; MAT schools with sixth form provision; and ITPs.

5.3.1   Key findings

- All settings offer vocational and academic programmes from Entry Level to Level 5, with some also providing Higher Education (HE). Apprenticeships are available in most settings, except MATs, which primarily offer A-levels and some BTECs. All settings, except MATs, offer GCSE maths and English resits.

- All settings reported that they are located in high-deprivation areas and serve students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or high needs. FE colleges, MATs, ITPs, and one SFC operate across multiple campuses; the remaining SFCs are single campus.

- All settings require teaching staff to have or be working towards a Level 5 or Level 7 teaching qualification, with academic subject teachers needing a degree and vocational teachers requiring a Level 3 industry qualification or significant industry experience. There is no QTLS requirement, though MATs require qualified teacher status (QTS), and SFCs accept either QTS or QTLS.

5.3.2   FE colleges

This was an opportunistic sample, which resulted in colleges situated in London, East England and East Midlands. Table 5.2 below summarises contextual information for the FE colleges in scope.

Table 5.2: FE colleges context and demographics

FE college	Student numbers	Last Ofsted outcome	Location
1	3,539 16 to 19-year-olds ([a]4,319 total; 76 high needs[b])	Good (2023)	East Midlands
2	4,100 16 to 19-year-olds ([a]7,800 total; 800 high needs)	Good (2023)	Greater London
3	2,495 16 to 19-year-olds ([a]5,243 total; 369 SEND[c])	Requires Improvement (2022) (2023 monitoring visit outcome: significant progress)	East London
4	7,500 16 to 19-year-olds	Good (2025)	East England
5	2,786 16 to 19-year-olds ([a]6,605 total; 169 high needs)	Good (2023)	East Midlands
6	4,752 16 to 19-year-olds ([a]9,275 total: 559 SEND)	Good (2023)	East England and East Midlands

[a]*Total number of students, including adult learning and apprenticeships.*
[b]*High needs students are a subset of SEND students who require significant additional support beyond what standard SEND provision offers, for example, specialist staff, adapted learning environments, or intensive one-to-one support. Typically, high needs students have Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) or other formal assessments indicating their requirement for substantial interventions.*

[c]*SEND refers to a broad category of students who have learning difficulties or disabilities that require special educational support, for example, dyslexia, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), speech and language difficulties, sensory impairments, or physical disabilities.*

The FE colleges included in the review vary in size, but all provide a broad range of vocational and academic programmes, from Entry Level up to Level 5. Some FE colleges also offer HE provision, including foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and bachelor's degrees. All colleges operate across multiple campuses and confirmed that they are in areas of high deprivation. As a result, many of their students come from low-income backgrounds and/or have experience of being in care. Notably, FE college 1 reported the highest number of teenage pregnancies and young people in care across the UK. All colleges also have high numbers of students at risk of being Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) students, compared to the 2024 national average of 13.2% (ONS, 2025).

Teaching staff across all the colleges interviewed must hold, or be working towards upon appointment, a Level 5 or Level 7 teaching qualification. However, there is recognition that this can be a challenge in trade curriculum areas, where some teachers are coming straight from industry. CPD leads stated that a minimum of a Level 3 qualification or relevant industry experience in the teaching subject is preferred, while also acknowledging the same challenge. There is currently no formal requirement for staff to obtain QTLS status.

5.3.3   SFCs

Table 5.3 below presents contextual information for the SFCs included in the review. Like the FE colleges, these SFCs vary in size, serve students with high needs, and are located in areas of significant deprivation, as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Student numbers range from 1,000 to 5,500, with SFC 1 forming part of a larger group of general FE colleges. All SFCs offer Level 2 and Level 3 programmes, with a mix of vocational courses and A-level routes; notably, SFC 3 also delivers the T Level in Childcare. In addition, all SFCs provide GCSE maths and English resit opportunities, not only for their own students but also for individuals in the wider community. Despite the socio-economic challenges they face, all SFCs were rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in their most recent Ofsted inspections, reflecting the consistently high quality of provision.

Table 5.3: SFCs context and demographics

SFC	Student numbers (approximations)	Last Ofsted outcome	Location
1	5,500 lower quartile deprivation 1,200 apprentices and 361 students with high needs	Outstanding (2022)	South Yorkshire
2	2,000 12 students with high needs 400 disadvantaged[a]	Good (2025)	Northwest England
3	1,000 14 students with high needs	Good (2023)	North Yorkshire
4	3,000 students 300 SEND and a small number with high needs 50% disadvantaged	Outstanding (2024)	Yorkshire and the Humber

[a]*Disadvantaged students in post-16 settings are learners who face barriers to education and achievement due to socio-economic, personal, or educational challenges. These barriers can affect their ability to progress, succeed, or access the same opportunities as their peers.*

5.3.4   Qualifications of teaching staff

Due to the variation in teaching qualifications among teachers at the interviewed SFCs, a summary is provided in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4: Qualifications of SFC teaching staff

SFC	Teaching qualification	Teaching subject	QTS / QTLS
1	Level 5 Learning and Skills apprenticeship or PGCE	Degree, or Level 3 vocational qualification or industry experience	QTLS optional
2	PGCE or Certificate in Education	Degree, or Level 3 vocational qualification or industry experience	QTS
3	PGCE	Degree	QTS or QTLS
4	PGCE	Degree	QTS or QTLS

All SFCs included in the review require teaching staff to hold a teaching qualification, though specific requirements vary by organisation. In SFC 1, the minimum qualification requirement is the Level 5 Learning and Skills apprenticeship, or a PGCE for those who have a degree in their teaching subject. In SFC 2, teachers must have either a secondary teaching qualification or post-16 qualification at Level 5 (although the college prefers a Level 6 or Level 7 teaching qualification). Newly qualified teachers at this SFC must also follow the Early Career Teachers route, which is for teachers in the first two years of their teaching following qualification. SFC 3 and SFC 4 require their teachers to hold a PGCE. Regarding subject-specific qualifications, SFC 1 and SFC 2 require a minimum Level 3 vocational qualification or industry experience for teachers of vocational subjects and SFC 3 and SFC 4 require a degree in the subject being taught. None of the SFCs have a requirement for teachers to gain QTLS. However, at SFC 3, most teachers have previously worked in schools and hold a QTS. In both SFC 3 and SFC 4, QTS and QTLS are both optional, and teachers with a post-16 PGCE are supported in pursuing whichever of these they prefer.

5.3.4.1   *MATs with post-16 provision*

As with the other providers, contextual information was gathered regarding student numbers and geographical location, but socio-economic status is measured in terms of percentage of students in the schools who are in receipt of free school meals (FSM). It was not possible to gain this information for post-16 provision only and therefore, the percentages presented in Table 5.5 below relate to pupils across the MAT.

Table 5.51: School context and demographics

MAT	Student numbers	% FSM students	Last Ofsted outcome	Location
MAT1	30,000 total 2,500 16 to 18-year olds	40%	Outstanding (2022)	39 academies (Southeast, South, Midlands and London) 13 schools with sixth form provision
MAT2	30,000 total 975 16 to 18-year-olds	30–40%	Outstanding (2023)	40 academies North of England to Nottinghamshire seven schools with sixth form provision

As shown in Table 5.5 above, post-16 provision in both MATs is relatively small. In MAT 1, only 13 out of 40 academies have post-16 provision. Unsurprisingly therefore, the post-16 curriculum in both MATs is narrow, focusing primarily on A-levels in core subjects and some BTECs for example, sports science, and health and social care. MAT 1 also offers Professional Pathway provision, which is a high-quality vocational curriculum, aimed at preparing students to apply for selective universities or for progression directly into employment through school leaver programmes or degree apprenticeships.

All teaching staff in both MATs are qualified secondary schoolteachers with QTS. They are not specifically trained to teach post-16 and there is no requirement for them to gain QTLS:

> *'They're schoolteachers rather than post-16 specialists'* (MAT 2).

Those teaching only post-16 provision do so because their teaching subject is only offered at post-16 for example, criminology and psychology.

5.3.4.2   *ITPs*

Table 5.6 below shows contextual information for the ITPs in scope.

Table 5.6: ITP context and demographics

ITP	Student numbers	Last Ofsted outcome	Location
1	Approx. 8,000	Good (2023)	Southeast England, South England
2	500–550	Good (2024)	South Yorkshire, Northwest England, East Midlands, and West Midlands

While the initial intention was to interview four ITPs, only two responded to requests to participate in this practice review, limiting the generalisability of these findings. However, both of these operate across multiple centres. ITP 1 oversees eight colleges, with approximately 10,000 students, and ITP 2 has five centres in five counties. They were both adjudged 'Good' at their last Ofsted inspection.

The student demographic differs between ITPs, and this is reflected in the nature of their provision, although both reported high numbers of students resitting GCSE English and maths. At ITP 1, most students are aged 16–19 and the curriculum includes BTECs, apprenticeships, A-levels, and access to HE courses. In contrast, ITP 2 delivers tailor-made Study programmes for 16–18-year-olds (or 19+ students with an EHCP). ITP 2 serves 500 to 550 students a year, the majority of whom are considered non-traditional students, meaning they have SEND and/or have been excluded from secondary schools. ITP 2 see their role as helping their students *'understand that education is the way to build up, to get in employment, to have a better way of life'* (ITP 2).

Both ITPs require their teaching staff to gain a Level 5 teaching qualification, or an interim Level 3 qualification if they join part-way through the year. While there is no contractual requirement for teachers to gain QTLS, some of them do, and ITP 1 supports this by providing mentoring and financial support covering 50% of the Professional Formation application fees.

5.3.5 Timing, structure, and funding of CPD

This section presents data on the mode of CPD delivery (face-to-face or online), whether CPD activity is organisation-wide or department-specific, and how it is funded. To facilitate cross-provider comparison, the findings begin with an overview of the CPD structures across all provider types interviewed, as summarised in Table 5.7.

5.3.5.1 Key findings

- All settings interviewed offer whole-organisation CPD via INSET days, and all FE colleges and SFCs also have departmental-level CPD.

- All settings provide face-to-face CPD and just over half settings also offer online CPD.

- All FE colleges and half SFCs incorporate Industry Days when teachers spend time in relevant external settings for example, hospitals, law firms, Young Offenders Institutions (YOIs), to maintain currency of industry skills and knowledge.

- Almost all settings have a central CPD budget. ITPs have additional ring-fenced budgets for individual CPD requests with business benefit (e.g. master's qualifications, and subject-specific training).

All settings offer organisational CPD through whole-organisation INSET days. MAT 1 also delivers INSET days across all schools within the Trust, for teachers of 11–16 provision and 16–18 provision together. These sessions include generic CPD topics such as assessment for learning, alongside curriculum-specific training aimed at aligning curricula across the Trust. At the time of interview, MAT 2 was in the process of reinstating Trust-wide CPD, but current INSET days were planned at the Trust level and delivered within schools, often grouping geographically close schools together.

Whole-organisation INSET days are typically distributed throughout the year, except in the case of ITPs and SFC 3, who deliver INSET days on an ad hoc basis, responding flexibly to evolving organisational and staff needs. ITP 1 holds four INSET days annually, while ITP 2 offers three, plus an overnight residential CPD event for all centres at the end of the year.

All FE colleges and SFCs offer departmental CPD. FE colleges 4, 5, and 6 have implemented a 'Golden Hour' during which departments lead their own CPD sessions. At FE college 6, this occurs weekly, while at FE colleges 4 and 5 it is organised on an ad hoc basis in response to emerging needs. Similarly, at FE college 1, each school, comprising five or six curriculum areas, holds 'Stop the Clock' sessions. These sessions, supported by the teaching and learning quality leads, may address general staff development topics, such as health and safety or fire safety, or focus on specific quality improvement priorities identified within each curriculum area of the school. Among SFCs, SFC 1 dedicates an entire INSET day to departmental-level CPD, while SFC 4 holds weekly twilight CPD sessions within departments. Although SFC 2 and SFC 3 do not schedule departmental CPD on a regular basis, such provision does occur.

All the settings provide face-to-face CPD activities and just over half (8/14) offer online CPD. FE college 2 have bite-size, on-demand recordings of webinars and masterclasses. These last 15 minutes, and focus on a very specific area, such as a particular teaching activity that teachers can then try out on their own. FE college 3 employs a system known as 'Tracks', comprising two-hour departmental sessions every three weeks. During the first hour, teachers share examples of good practice observed during learning walks, while the second hour is dedicated to sharing the findings of action research projects they have undertaken.

All the FE colleges, along with SFC 1 and SFC 4, incorporate 'Industry Days' into their CPD provision. These occur annually, except at SFC 4, where they take place biennially and in FE college 1, where teachers are required to complete 30 hours per year of industry-related experience, alongside 30 hours of other CPD. During Industry Days, teachers spend time in an alternative professional setting, such as a hospital for health and social care teachers, a law firm for law teachers, or a YOI for those teaching English, maths, or in other related areas. Following the experience, teachers share their insights and reflections within their departments as part of departmental CPD.

Table 5.72: CPD structure according to provider type

Provider type	Whole-organisation INSET days per year	Other	Department-level CPD	Online	Face-to-face	Industry Days
FE colleges						
1	Four	'Stop the Clock'[a] time	X	X	X	X (30 hours annually)
2	Five	One hour per week 'on-demand'[b]	X	X	X	X
3	11 (including a full week July)	One hour per week 'Tracks'[c]	X	X	X	X
4	Three (two Industry Days)	Ad hoc 'Golden Hour'[d]	X	X	X	X
5	Week-long pick and mix	'Golden Hour'	X	X	X	X
6	Two	Weekly 'Golden Hour'	X		X	X
SFCs						
1	Three days, whole week in July, one day per month (apprentice team)		X	X	X	X
2	One day in September and January, whole week in July	Six meetings with mentor	X		X	
3	Ad hoc and twilight		X		X	

Provider type	Whole-organisation INSET days per year	Other	Department-level CPD	Online	Face-to-face	Industry Days
4	One week (before student enrolment week), one week in January and eight days in July		X		X	X
MATs						
1	Three days			X	X	
2		1.75 hours per week		X	X	
ITPs						
1	Four days	X			X	
2	Three or more days overnight residential	X			X	

[a]*Students are released an hour early so staff can undertake CPD activity in teams.*
[b]*Recorded CPD sessions staff can select as required.*
[c]*Tracks are sustained CPD sessions delivered over the course of a year, each addressing a defined area of professional practice.*
[d]*CPD sessions lasting 60 minutes, which are conducted within individual departments.*

Regarding funding, all but one FE college has a central budget for CPD activities. Among the SFCs, 75% have a central budget and for the remaining SFC, the CPD budget is held by their HR department. Both schools have centrally held CPD budgets, while the ITPs have ring-fenced budgets that they use to finance individual CPD activities that align with the organisation's business needs. This could include master's qualifications or subject-specific training.

5.3.6 Selecting CPD: Design, content, factors, and themes

The design and delivery of CPD across all provider types in scope share some common principles, including a focus on organisational priorities, teaching quality, and staff development, though specific approaches vary by context, scale, and structure.

5.3.6.1 Key findings

- CPD in all settings is overseen by managers, typically senior managers with a quality or teaching and learning role, quality teams or HR, along with managers responsible for organisational CPD.

- Most CPD is designed and delivered in-house by middle managers, supported by teaching and learning teams, with external specialists used selectively in a minority of settings. MATs have specific subject-specific networks or directors to design and deliver CPD.

- Aim of CPD varies between settings, but focuses on a range of topics, including organisational priorities, teacher retention, career progression, sustainability, and responsiveness to policy changes. MAT CPD aims for consistent provision across all schools, focusing on standardised curriculum delivery and assessment.

5.3.7 Design and delivery

In the FE colleges, CPD is typically overseen by either the quality team or HR, in collaboration with the relevant organisational CPD lead. While external specialists are engaged for selected sessions, the majority of CPD is designed and delivered in-house. Middle managers responsible for teaching and learning, supported by quality and learning excellence teams, lead this work. This in-house model is largely driven by cost considerations. For example, FE college 5 reported a desire to expand in-house delivery further as a strategy for long-term sustainability. The primary aim of CPD in the FE colleges is to align with organisational strategic goals and vision while also fostering internal talent by offering career development pathways.

SFCs follow a similar structure, with CPD typically led by senior managers, such as the principal or assistant principal for quality. Only SFC 1 involves its teaching and learning team in designing the CPD offer. SFC 1 and SFC 4 reported that they also engage external specialists for selected sessions. Notably, SFC 3 engages its PGCE trainees in CPD delivery, such as a recent session on active learning delivered during an INSET day. As in FE colleges, CPD in SFCs focuses on organisational priorities, teacher retention, and professional growth. Additionally, CPD leads in SFCs emphasised responsiveness to policy changes as a key driver shaping their CPD offer.

In the MATs interviewed, CPD leads occupy senior or middle leadership roles. In MAT 1, the lead is a vice principal who also serves as an Ofsted inspector and oversees teaching and learning in Professional Pathway and BTEC provision. In MAT 2, the CPD lead is a head of department managing post-16 information technology (IT) and Business provision, while also teaching.

MAT 1 has a structured system of subject networks, each led by a network lead responsible for subject-specific CPD across the Trust. These network leads are selected for their teaching expertise. Similarly, MAT 2 uses directors to deliver standardised CPD, but only in core subjects such as English and maths. In both MATs, the primary aim of CPD is to achieve consistent provision within subjects across all schools, ensuring that all teachers deliver the same content at the same time and that teaching approaches and staff values are uniform across the Trust. As a result, CPD topics are largely repeated annually and focus on curriculum standardisation.

Neither MAT currently offers CPD tailored to post-16 provision. This is due either to the small scale of post-16 education or the assumption that *'what works well for 11–16 should also work well for 16–18'* (MAT 1). CPD leads noted that in cases where post-16 subjects like criminology and psychology do not align with the wider school curriculum, teachers typically arrange their own subject-specific CPD as part of self-directed learning.

Both ITPs assign responsibility for CPD design and delivery to internal managers. Their CPD typically focuses on generic teaching pedagogy, including behaviour management, assessment, and feedback. Due to its small size, ITP 1 seldom engages external consultants for CPD delivery, but will bring in industry experts when specialist training is needed, such as for green energy technologies (e.g. heat and air pumps). ITP 2 invites external organisations, such as the police, to deliver training on local safeguarding issues, including knife crime and county lines. ITP 1 ensures CPD reflects its core values, with recent sessions focused on sustainability and post-Covid challenges. Both ITPs also conduct one-to-one meetings with teaching staff to identify personalised CPD needs. These often relate to pedagogy, SEND support (particularly for students with autism), and inclusive classroom practice.

5.4   Evidence used to inform CPD content

This section is organised by evidence type, as outlined in Table 5.8 below, to support comparison across different settings. CPD leads were asked which forms of evidence they used to shape CPD content, with prompts provided where necessary, for example, 'student outcomes' or 'Ofsted' (see section 'CPD lead interview schedule', Appendix 2).

5.4.1   Key findings

- Vast majority (93%, 13/14) of CPD leads identified learning walks or observations as a key source of evidence to inform CPD, and half mentioned student outcomes as a factor. Student voice was also considered by five settings, as were Ofsted or policy considerations.

- All SFCs and most FE colleges (83%, 5/6) use the SAR to inform CPD. Only MAT 1 mentioned using the SAR, and neither ITP use it.

- A majority (79%, 11/14) of CPD leads referred to legal requirements (e.g. Safeguarding, Prevent) as factors influencing CPD.

- Just under half (43%, 6/14) of CPD leads cited curriculum planning and/or staff surveys as evidence for CPD.

- In the ITPs, most CPD was self-selected.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, all CPD leads, except for SFC 2, identified learning walks or observations as key sources of evidence to inform CPD. Only 50% (7/14) of CPD leads cited student outcomes as a contributing factor. However, two FE colleges and three SFCs that did not specifically mention student outcomes did note that student voice was considered during CPD planning. It is possible that student outcome data were not discussed separately because they are incorporated into the SAR. Interestingly, references to Ofsted or broader policy considerations were limited, raised only by FE college 2, SFC 3 and SFC 4, and both MATs. This was somewhat unexpected given the ongoing policy changes and the prominence of Ofsted in post-16 education.

All SFCs and 83% (5/6) of FE colleges reported using the annual SAR to inform CPD planning. In contrast, only MAT 1 mentioned using the SAR, and neither of the ITPs referred to it. A total of 11 CPD leads (79%) cited legal requirements, such as Safeguarding and Prevent, as factors influencing their CPD planning. This included all FE colleges, three SFCs, and both ITPs, though neither MAT referred to such requirements. While these topics do not align with the definition of CPD used in this review, they are included here as the data suggest they constitute a significant component of post-16 staff development.

Notably, curriculum planning was relatively infrequently cited as a source of evidence, with only 43% (6/14) of CPD leads referencing it as a basis for CPD design. None of the SFC leads referred to curriculum planning, possibly due to its integration into broader strategic goals and the SAR process.

Staff feedback and surveys were also cited by 43% (6/14) of CPD leads as sources of evidence. These included FE college 1 and FE college 2, SFC 1 and SFC 3, and both ITPs. In the ITPs, this finding aligns with their model of self-directed CPD, making the use of staff input unsurprising.

Table 5.83: Evidence used to inform CPD content

Provider type	Learning walks	Student outcomes	Policy change / Ofsted	SAR	Legal requirements	Curriculum planning	Staff survey
FE colleges							
1	X	X		X	X	X	X
2	X	X	X		X		X
3	X	X		X	X	X	
4	X			X	X	X	
5	X			X	X	X	
6	X			X	X		
SFCs							
1	X	X		X	X		X
2				X	X		
3	X		X	X			X
4	X		X	X	X		
MATs							
1	X		X	X		X	
2	X	X	X			X	
ITPs							
1	X	X			X		X
2	X	X			X		X

5.4.2   Focus of in-house CPD over the last 18 months

The section begins with an overview for the focus of in-house CPD for each provider type, presented in Table 5.9 below, followed by a more detailed commentary on the table.

5.4.2.1. Key findings

- All providers emphasise improving teaching and learning in CPD.

- Around 64% of CPD leads (9/14) identify digital skills or AI as key CPD topics, particularly in FE colleges (except FE college 2), SFC 2 and SFC 3, and both ITPs.

- Only 21% of settings include green skills or ESD in CPD, despite its significance in the context of climate change, reflected by its inclusion in the ETF Professional Standards for QTLS certification. SFCs, MATs, and ITPs generally do not offer CPD focused on ESD or green skills.

- A minority of FE colleges and SFCs offer CPD related to well-being or mental health.

- Most CPD is generic across the settings, though departmental or subject-specific sessions provide opportunities to tailor and contextualise CPD to meet the needs of individual subjects.

Table 5.9: Focus of in-house CPD programmes in past 18 months

Provider type	Focus over the last 18 months
FE colleges	
1	Digital focus Sustainability and green skills Volunteering Well-being Student starting points Creating independent students Industry Days
2	Green skills Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Behaviour Attendance Feedback Industry-specific CPD Well-being
3	Active learning AI Behaviour management Industry Days
4	Assessment for learning Planning and sequencing Learning activities Behaviour management Digital learning
5	Based on departments Teaching and learning Assessment Digital (Microsoft badges)
6	AI Formative assessment ESD Assessment Subject-specific pedagogy
SFCs	
1	Good quality teaching and learning Restorative practice

Provider type	Focus over the last 18 months
	Mental well-being
	Industry Days
2	T Level
	Microsoft IT
3	Active learning
	AI
	Behaviour management
4	Questioning
	Independent practice
	Starts and plenaries
	Feedback
	Industry Days
MATs	
1	Consistency across the MAT
2	Consistency across the MAT
ITPs	
1	Mandatory topics e.g. Safeguarding, Prevent, health and safety, etc.
	AI
	Behaviour for learning
2	Mandatory topics e.g. Safeguarding, Prevent, health and safety, etc.
	AI
	Behaviour for learning
	SEND
	Assessment English and maths

As shown in Table 5.9 above, across all providers there is a strong and consistent emphasis on using CPD to enhance teaching and learning. This is unsurprising, since the evidence used to shape CPD topics is often drawn from quality assurance processes such as lesson observations and learning walks.

In addition to pedagogy, 64% (9/14) of CPD leads identified digital skills or AI as key areas of focus. This included all FE colleges except for FE college 2, along with SFC 2 and SFC 3 and both ITPs, reflecting the increasing significance of digital technologies in education (UN, 2024; UNESCO, 2024).

In contrast, CPD related to well-being or mental health was reported in only three settings: FE college 1 and FE college 2, and SFC 1. These initiatives included activities such as yoga sessions, sound gong baths, volunteering opportunities, and gym access. The limited focus on well-being is surprising given the well-documented impact of workload pressures on teacher retention (Totterdell *et al.,* 2004) and the pressing need to address the teacher recruitment and retention crisis (DfE, 2021; NFER, 2025; Tyler *et al.,* 2024).

Only FE college 4 reported a distinct approach to CPD for English and maths teachers, delegating the design and delivery of subject-specific CPD to individual departments rather than managing it centrally. These sessions are delivered during a designated 'Golden Hour' allocated specifically for CPD. In contrast, SFC 1 noted that their English and maths teachers are fully integrated across other curriculum areas and are not treated as a separate department. However, this team does come together for CPD activity on Wednesday afternoons, allowing for some targeted development.

Overall, the interview data suggest that most CPD in post-16 settings remains largely generic. Nevertheless, when CPD is delivered at the departmental level or within subject-specific groupings, it may be more effectively contextualised to address the unique needs of individual teaching disciplines.

5.5   Support for teachers to undertake CPD

The final theme examined how teachers are supported to engage in CPD, including their autonomy in selecting opportunities and available resources like funding and time.

5.5.1 Key findings

- All providers allow teachers to choose CPD activities, such as action research, conferences, academic qualifications, and subject-specific training.

- Several colleges (4/6 FE colleges and one SFC) reported they offer a menu of CPD options during INSET days for teachers based on individual needs.

- All settings have a central CPD budget, with the majority (71%) also funding individual CPD aligned to organisational priorities.

- Most settings provide follow-up support through appraisals and one-to-one meetings. Coaching, mentoring, and peer support (e.g. 'buddy systems') are available in some settings.

- Most providers allocate time for short-term CPD activities, with four offering weekly protected time (one hour per week to three hours per six weeks). Few providers offer remission for longer CPD programmes.

CPD leads reported that teachers generally have a degree of autonomy in choosing PD activities, including action research, conferences, academic qualifications, and subject-specific training. Teachers also select their own industry placements, for example, motor vehicle instructors may work within automotive firms, while chemistry teachers may gain experience in pharmaceutical companies.

Both ITPs require teachers to complete a training needs analysis, regularly reviewed with managers to align CPD with personal and organisational goals. In ITP 2, teachers take responsibility for setting CPD targets and reviewing progress. MAT 1 encourages teachers to deepen their subject knowledge and effectiveness by becoming exam markers, and SFC 1 and MAT 1 noted that becoming an Ofsted inspector is viewed as self-directed CPD, though currently only managers have undertaken this.

In some settings, INSET days often offer a menu of CPD options, allowing teachers to choose sessions that align with their individual PD needs. Financial support for CPD is common across settings, with all maintaining central budgets and many allowing individual funding requests. For example, FE college 1, 2, 3, and 6, SFC 1, 2, and 4, ITP 2, and both MATs provide such support. FE college 3 allocates £750 annually per teacher, and FE college 2 approves over 70% of funding requests. In FE college 6, funding varies by department.

Regarding follow-up support, CPD leads across nearly all settings reported that teachers receive tailored guidance in selecting CPD opportunities through appraisal systems and one-to-one meetings with managers. This personalised approach aligns CPD with individual career stages and needs (Day and Gu, 2007). All providers indicated that teachers have PD plans with specific targets, regularly reviewed within the annual appraisal cycle, reflecting mechanism 3 (goal setting) and mechanism 12 (action planning).

Coaching and mentoring are also emphasised, particularly for newly qualified or recruited teachers, as part of induction at SFC 4, and extended to those with significant development needs in several FE colleges (1, 2, and 3), SFCs (1 and 4), and ITP 1, aligning with mechanism 7 (practical social/peer support). FE college 1, 2, and 3, along with SFC 1, also operate peer support systems, such as teaching triangles or squares, where teachers are paired or grouped in small clusters (usually three to four individuals) to provide collaborative CPD support, representing another variation of mechanism 7.

While few providers offer remission for longer CPD programmes, CPD leads stated that short-term CPD time is generally protected. Four providers (FE college 1, MAT 2, and both ITPs) allocate weekly protected CPD time, ranging from one hour per week to three hours every six weeks, mainly for subject team CPD or individual development. However, ITP 1 noted that time is *'the big barrier'* (ITP 1) to teachers engaging in CPD.

6.   Findings: Output 2

This section presents findings from a two-stage analysis, addressing research questions 2 and 3: a light-touch analysis of 90 externally developed CPD programmes and a more detailed examination of nine selected programmes to answer research questions 2 and 3. This dual approach offers both a broad overview and detailed insights, with the latter presented as case studies in Appendix 3 to illustrate how key mechanisms operate in practice. The externally developed programmes were assessed using the CPD framework, as well as by duration, delivery mode (online or face-to-face), and cost. Each section opens with the relevant research question, followed by a summary of the key findings.

6.1   Output 2: Stage 1

Stage 1 of Output 2 addresses research question 2: To what extent do existing externally developed CPD programmes conform with the 14 mechanisms for effective CPD, as identified by Sims *et al.* (2021)?

6.1.1   Key findings

- Most programmes are in-person and under two hours.

- Around 66% did not state a fee; others range from £55 to £495; and 24% are free.

- All 14 CPD mechanisms are represented; 13 programmes included all 14 mechanisms.

- Most common mechanisms: managing cognitive load; credible source; instruction. Least common mechanisms: revisiting material, likely due to short duration.

The typical duration of the externally developed programmes is two hours or less (69% 62/90 programmes) and these are all offered by the largest CPD provider in the review. One programme extends over a year, and this is offered by the second-largest CPD provider in the review. There are also ten programmes comprising multiple sessions of two hours (ten x two hours, three x two hours, two x two hours), offered by these same two CPD providers. The shortest programmes are bite-sized, 15-minute videos and there are 11 of these, all offered by one provider. There are also seven programmes lasting 20 to 30 minutes each. The remaining programmes last between two and a half hours and four hours, with three programmes not stating duration.

The majority of programmes 66% (59/90) are delivered face-to-face, 31% (28/90) are online, of which 11% (10/90) are webinars. There are two blended programmes, and one programme did not list its duration. Programme costs ranged from £55 (2%, 2/90 programmes) to £459 (4%, 4/90 programmes) with three bespoke in-house delivered programmes costing from £495. While 24% (22/90) of the programmes were free, the majority of programmes (66%, 59/90) did not state their fee.

Across the 90 CPD programmes, all 14 mechanisms were represented, indicating that each is feasibly implementable within the post-16 education sector, albeit with some variation. In certain cases, it was not possible to confirm definitively whether a mechanism was present, but there was sufficient evidence to suggest its likely inclusion. For example, when participants engaged in collaborative tasks during CPD sessions, such as rehearsing teaching strategies, it was reasonable to infer they received feedback (mechanism 8) from facilitators or peers, even if this was not explicitly stated. Such instances were coded as 'probably yes'. Conversely, where a mechanism's absence could reasonably be assumed, for example, practical social/peer support (mechanism 7) to maintain the behaviour beyond the CPD session, these were coded as 'probably no'.

Thirteen programmes clearly demonstrated all 14 mechanisms, while all programmes included at least some. The most frequently evidenced mechanisms were mechanism 1 (managing cognitive load), mechanism 4 (credible source), and mechanism 6 (instruction). These were closely followed by mechanism 3 (goal setting), mechanism 9 (modelling or developing new techniques), mechanism 10 (rehearsal), and mechanism 11 (prompts/cues).

The least evidenced was mechanism 2 (revisiting material), likely due to limited reporting or the predominance of short duration programmes (up to two hours), which afford fewer opportunities for review. Credible sources were evidenced

through references to relevant research and theory, as well as the credentials and professional experience of the delivery team, who were recognised experts in their field.

6.2 Output 2: Stage 2

Stage 2 of Output 2 addresses research question 3: To what extent do CPD activities organised within settings/departments conform with the 14 mechanisms for effective CPD, as identified by Sims *et al.* (2021)?

6.2.1 Key findings

- All 14 mechanisms are present across the nine programmes, with varying frequencies and forms.

- Programmes with explicit, structured CPD (e.g. action planning, goal setting) were more successful in integrating multiple mechanisms.

- Some mechanisms are more implicitly embedded and might not always be explicitly stated in CPD materials but are still part of the process.

- Goal setting and credible sources are commonly present across all nine programmes.

- Some mechanisms, like praise/reinforce, feedback, and rehearsal, were less commonly explicit in the programmes, though present in several.

- Self-monitoring and context-specific repetition mechanisms may not be explicitly stated but could be occurring through other methods like reflective tasks.

- Praise/reinforce and feedback could be implicit, as observed in peer discussions and online tasks.

- Rehearsal was typically part of workbook activities and real-time application in practice.

- Self-monitoring was mostly found in reflective tasks or gap tasks between sessions.

- Context-specific repetition is harder to observe but may occur in practical, subject-specific tasks or scenarios.

Table 6.1: Number of programmes evidencing mechanisms from in-depth analysis

Theme	Mechanism	Yes	No explicit evidence
Instil insight	1. Manage cognitive load	8	1
	2. Revisit material	8	1
Motivate goals	3. Goal setting	9	
	4. Credible source	9	
	5. Praise/reinforce	6	3
Teaching techniques	6. Instruction	9	
	7. Practical social support (peer support)	9	
	8. Feedback	6	3
	9. Modelling (developing new techniques)	7	2
	10. Rehearsal	6	3
Embed practice	11. Prompts/cues	6	3
	12. Action planning (implementation intentions)	9	
	13. Self-monitoring	6	3
	14. Context-specific repetition (embedding practice)	5	4

Table 6.1 presents the findings from the detailed analysis of nine CPD programmes. As shown in the case studies, the 14 mechanisms are more explicitly embedded, with clear evidence of their implementation. For example, mechanism 7 (practical social/peer support), is demonstrated through integrated peer support and collaborative activities. Where mechanisms are not clearly evident in the CPD materials, these are recorded as 'No explicit evidence'. Some activities

provide evidence for multiple mechanisms, such as structured reflection tasks that combine instruction, rehearsal, self-monitoring, and action planning. These are cited as an example under each relevant mechanism.

6.2.2   Mechanism 1: Manage cognitive load

In one programme, evidence of this mechanism included structured sequencing of material, delivered via an online platform with overviews, diagrams, tables, and videos to support understanding (see case studies 3, 5, and 6 in Appendix 3). The content was concise, clearly focused, and presented in manageable segments with defined aims. Other examples of managing cognitive load include short, targeted sessions on specific topics, such as a single aspect of digital technology (see case study 1 in Appendix 3). Other examples of managing cognitive load include short sessions with a very specific focus, such as a single aspect of digital technology (see case study 1 in Appendix 3).

6.2.3   Mechanism 2: Revisit material

Materials are revisited in a number of ways in these programmes. Some of these include using real exam questions so that participants are revisiting content they have already taught and learning new approaches that they will revisit multiple times in the future (see case studies 5 and 9 in Appendix 3). Additionally, in-session tasks explicitly require participants to reflect on future practice, for example, 'Find and bookmark the Standards Unit on the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) centre website; Take some time to explore and reflect on activities', and gap tasks between sessions of a six-month programme require participants to revisit and build on materials utilised in the session (see case study 5 in Appendix 3).

6.2.4   Mechanism 3: Goal setting

The gap tasks in case study 5 (Appendix 3) also support the mechanism of goal setting, as participants are asked to reflect on their practice and commit to integrating a specific technique into their teaching. Another example can be found in case study 7 in Appendix 3, where teachers are required to identify an aspect of the CPD session that they will apply in a lesson the following day, reinforcing immediate and intentional implementation.

6.2.5   Mechanism 4: Credible source

This mechanism is evidenced through references to specific literature and pedagogical theories that underpin CPD sessions. For example, Zoltan Dienes (1971) is cited to support the use of manipulatives in connecting real-world experiences to abstract concepts, while Malcolm Swan (2006) informs a session on diagnostic and responsive teaching (see case study 5 in Appendix 3). Sessions also reference official guidance, such as the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Key Characteristics and Essential Elements of Teaching and Learning in Technical and Vocational Education (see case study 4 in Appendix 3), and established resources like Teach Like a Champion and the Great Teaching Toolkit (Coe *et al.,* 2020) (see case study 3 in Appendix 3). Credibility is further reinforced when facilitators are recognised as experts by participants, as seen in case study 5 in Appendix 3.

6.2.6   Mechanism 5: Praise/reinforce

Praise and reinforcement of specific behaviours can be difficult to observe without direct participation in the CPD sessions. Examples of motivational praise within online programmes include general messages of encouragement, such as 'Well done – you have almost completed your first module' (see case study 6 in Appendix 3), and a final 'Congratulations!' at the conclusion of the programme (see case study 4 in Appendix 3). However, although some debate remains regarding the impact of praise (Glerum *et al.,* 2020), research conducted in school contexts suggests that praise that is specific and aligned with identified learning goals may be more effective (Francis *et al.,* 2019), whereas generic praise can be counterproductive (Dweck, 1999).

6.2.7   Mechanism 6: Instruction

Direct instruction is evidenced through clear guidance on using specific tools and teaching strategies. For example, case study 1 includes step-by-step support for using a digital tool, while case study 7 provides take-home materials such as the Teacher's Talk Tactics handout to reinforce key instructional approaches (see Appendix 3). These materials serve as prompts for teachers to rehearse and apply the techniques introduced. In case study 5, a worked maths problem is annotated with guidance on how to explain the solution, offering a practical model of instructional delivery (see Appendix 3).

6.2.8   Mechanism 7: Practical social support (peer support)

A collaborative approach to CPD fosters peer support through various methods, including peer teaching via group work followed by presentations (see case study 5 in Appendix 3), coaching and mentoring relationships, and 'teaching triangles' (see case study 1 in Appendix 3).

6.2.9   Mechanism 8: Feedback

In addition to collaborative tasks, presentations, and discussions that encourage peer support and feedback, some programmes integrate interactive online elements. For example, participants in one programme share responses to reflective prompts,[7] such as how they embed workplace practices into teaching, via an online platform (see case study 4 in Appendix 3). In a six-month programme, gap tasks between sessions require participants to trial a technique and reflect on it in the next session (see case study 5 in Appendix 3). Another programme involves rewriting a partner's question (see case study 7 in Appendix 3), encouraging peer-to-peer feedback and deeper reflection. These activities embed feedback mechanisms that foster discussion and reflection, and support both individual learning and collective professional growth.

6.2.10   Mechanism 9: Modelling (developing new techniques)

Explicit modelling can be difficult to observe in face-to-face CPD without observing the session. However, one online CPD programme provides clear evidence through a video created by teaching and learning mentors that demonstrates effective questioning strategies (see case study 7 in Appendix 3). Another programme (see case study 5 in Appendix 3) employs a loop input approach, where participants can experience and then apply techniques in their own teaching. For example, warm-up questions such as: 'What does a diagnostic and responsive approach mean to you?' and 'If you know that 3x4=12, what else do you know?' demonstrate how topics can be personalised to teachers, while also illustrating how teachers can engage their students in critical thinking and reinforce concepts.

6.2.11   Mechanism 10: Rehearsal

Rehearsal in these programmes mainly involves workbook activities completed during and after CPD sessions, allowing participants to try them out and reflect on their practice. For instance, one online programme provides a workbook for each session, with tasks for applying learned techniques (see case study 5 in Appendix 3). Another programme incorporates application tasks, such as planning a group task for students using a list of potential tasks introduced in CPD sessions (see case study 6 in Appendix 3). Additional rehearsal activities include marking practice papers to practise feedback techniques, as seen in a session on assessment for learning (see case study 9 in Appendix 3).

6.2.12   Mechanism 11: Prompts/cues

Prompts in these programmes typically take the form of direct instructions or guiding questions for teachers. For example, one prompt asks teachers to 'Use a number line as a tool and reflect on its impact on your teaching and your learners' (see case study 5 in Appendix 3). In another instance, a brief summary of key focus points in learning exercises and application tasks serves as a prompt, particularly when incorporated into lesson plans (see case study 6 in Appendix 3). In one of the

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[7] 'Think about functional competence. How have you incorporated appropriate workplace practices into your teaching?'

online programmes, prompts encourage teachers to share ideas on 'flipping'[8] their T Level curriculum. Additionally, the programme includes 'Over to You' questions at the end of the CPD, such as: 'What methods do you currently employ to encourage, develop, and consolidate industry-appropriate behaviours in your learners? Please share your thoughts in the comments'.

6.2.13 Mechanism 12: Action planning (implementation intentions)

Action planning in some of the programmes analysed involves completing a formal CPD record that is discussed at annual appraisal (see case studies 1, 3, and 7 in Appendix 3). Workbooks also prompt action planning, for example, one workbook features a page titled 'Action Planning' with instructions to set short- and long-term targets related to the course content (see case study 4 in Appendix 3). This is then supported with bullet points listing key elements from the course, serving as both an aide-mémoire and a prompt to revisit material. Another example is a lesson planning form completed by teachers, identifying the strategies they will try before the next session (see case study 3 in Appendix 3).

6.2.14 Mechanism 13: Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring in the programmes tends to take the form of reflective tasks, again using a gap task between sessions, or a workbook, for example, 'Reflect on the characteristics of technical and vocational teaching described on the previous page' (see case study 4 in Appendix 3); 'Use ratio tables as a tool and reflect on its impact on your teaching and your students' (see case study 5 in Appendix 3).

6.2.15 Mechanism 14: Context-specific repetition (embedding practice)

As shown in Table 6.1 above, explicit examples of context-specific repetition were less common across the nine programmes. However, this does not necessarily indicate the absence of such mechanisms, rather, they may not have been clearly articulated in the available materials. A clear example appears in case study 5 (Appendix 3), where session materials explicitly link module learning outcomes to both 'learning about effective pedagogy in the maths GCSE resit classroom' and 'applying these with practical strategies and resources'. This alignment gives participants a direct opportunity to transfer learning from the session into their professional context thereby, reinforcing the application of learning in a subject-specific setting.

In summary, while some mechanisms are more frequently represented than others, there is evidence of all 14 mechanisms being utilised across the nine programmes analysed for Output 2. Many of the examples above can be found contextualised in the case studies in Appendix 3.

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[8] Flipped learning is an instructional approach where students first engage with new material independently, often through videos, readings, or online resources, before the class session, freeing up class time for deeper engagement and application.

7.   Discussion and implications

In this section the research questions are answered in turn and implications of the findings are discussed. Key findings are summarised as bullet points at the beginning of each section and then discussed in more detail in the narrative that follows.

7.1   Output 1

The online surveys gathered insights into CPD experiences from a broad range of post-16 teachers and CPD leads, enabling comparison across provider types. Complementary interviews with CPD providers explored the structure, content, delivery, funding, and marketing of CPD offers, while interviews with CPD leads examined CPD scheduling, participation tracking, and follow-up support for applying learning in practice.

7.1.1   Overview of CPD for teachers in post-16 settings

The overall findings are summarised in the list below:

- In-house CPD is more prevalent than externally developed CPD, though 50% CPD leads interviewed include externally developed CPD.

- Most in-house CPD focuses on generic pedagogies.

- There is a mix of formats for CPD across settings and CPD providers, including online, face-to-face, and self-directed. In-house CPD spans both face-to-face and online formats.

- Cost-effectiveness and sustainability are key perceived advantages of in-house provision. External CPD is often linked to funded initiatives, especially for English and maths resit teaching, reflecting funding constraints and policy priorities.

- Around 93% of settings offer between 2 and 11 INSET days each year, typically scheduled at the start, middle, and end of the year. Some settings hold INSET days consecutively in July, ending with a celebration or conference.

- Around 79% of CPD providers also offer regular shorter CPD sessions during the year.

- Majority of settings (58.8%) deliver CPD at organisational level, with nearly a third (27.3%) delivering at departmental level, and 11.7% at individual level. Departmental CPD is often subject-specific.

- Coaching was one of the most commonly delivered in-house CPD activities, as reported by 81% of CPD leads.

- Disconnect noted: 50.8% of teachers reported most CPD is online and completed in their own time.

- All providers offer face-to-face CPD.

- Teachers can engage in self-selected CPD aligned with organisational goals, pending approval.

- Around 42% of CPD leads encourage practitioner action research.

Although there are structural and format-based similarities across providers, CPD for post-16 teachers also varies in volume, content, and perceived usefulness, echoing Loy's (2024) observations. This variation may stem from the deregulation of CPD, giving college leaders autonomy over its scope and focus (LSIS, 2013; Loy, 2024). Such flexibility allows CPD to be tailored to the unique priorities and strategic goals of individual organisations, which naturally differ depending on context, region, and student population.

7.1.2   Design of CPD: In-house or external provider developed

The data suggest that in-house CPD is the dominant model across all settings, spanning both face-to-face and online formats. While specific rationales were not always given, in-house provision appears to be preferred for its cost-effectiveness, which is an increasingly important consideration amid ongoing funding constraints. One CPD lead highlighted the sustainability of in-house CPD as a key advantage, reinforcing this perspective.

Beyond cost, in-house CPD may also be perceived as more relevant and credible, since those who design and deliver it often share the same professional context as participants (Goldhawk and Waller, 2023; mechanism 4: credible source). This contextual alignment may enhance both engagement and impact. However, reliance on in-house provision is not without limitations. Half of the CPD leads reported bringing in external specialists for areas where internal expertise was lacking, such as behaviour management, AI, and green skills. This underscores the continuing importance of subject-specific knowledge and the strategic use of external expertise.

Furthermore, when external CPD is used, it is often accessed through funded programmes, especially in policy-driven areas like English and maths resits. This pattern reflects both financial constraints and the strong influence of national education policy in shaping CPD priorities.

7.1.3   Format of CPD

The data reveal a varied but strategically planned approach to CPD timing and structure across settings. INSET days are common, offered by all but one provider (MAT 2), which plans to reinstate them next academic year. The variation in the number of INSET days, ranging from 2 to 11, reflects differing organisational priorities and capacities. Typically scheduled at the beginning and end of the academic year, with interview data indicating that several settings also include sessions mid-year, these scheduled days appear to support multiple CPD mechanisms: managing cognitive load (mechanism 1); goal setting (mechanism 3); and self-monitoring (mechanism 13). CPD leads noted that these time points align with distinct pedagogical needs, from planning for new learners to using assessment data mid-year and curriculum development at the end.

In some settings, consecutive INSET days, typically at the end of the academic year in July, create space for more intensive CPD days, often combined with celebratory events or conferences. These help reinforce professional identity and practice through praise and recognition (mechanism 5). Meanwhile, the MATs align INSET days with assessment cycles, promoting consistency across schools and subject areas.

Alongside whole-organisation events, nearly 80% of providers also offer regular, shorter CPD sessions throughout the year. These sessions, such as 'Golden Hour' or 'Stop the Clock', are often embedded within team structures and reflect a deliberate effort to manage cognitive load (mechanism 1) by delivering focused, digestible content. Some formats, like 15-minute online sessions or CPD built into team meetings, promote immediate application and routine integration into practice, aligning with mechanism 10 (rehearsal).

Crucially, CPD is not limited to organisational-level activity. While 58.8% of CPD leads indicated that most CPD occurs at this level, significant proportions reported provision at departmental (27.9%) and individual (11.7%) levels. Departmental CPD, particularly within MATs and SFCs, tends to be subject-specific and responsive to emerging needs, often occurring during INSET days or regular team meetings. In all the FE colleges and two of the SFCs, subject-specific CPD includes Industry Days, for example, health and social care staff may spend an INSET day in industry to maintain current professional knowledge and skills, supporting their dual professionalism.[9]

At the individual level, coaching dominates in-house CPD, as reported by 81% of CPD lead respondents. However, a disconnect emerges between CPD leads and teachers: while leads emphasise coaching, 50.8% of teachers report that self-paced online programmes completed in their own time constitute their main CPD experience. Although such activity may

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[9] Vocational lecturers in FE are characterised as dual professionals; they are industry professionals in their subject specialism and also teaching professionals (ETF, 2022).

not align directly with the identified mechanisms, it can foster professional agency and subject-specific engagement (Lawrence and Hall, 2018). However, the effectiveness of self-selected CPD time appears to be contested; survey data suggest designated time is available for such activity, but CPD leads' views on its accessibility and use differ from teachers' accounts. This misalignment signals a need for clearer communication and improved tracking of how CPD time is utilised, which is further explored under research question 1. d) 'What sources of evidence or information on teaching and learning are drawn on when CPD is created in-house?'

Overall, these findings suggest that while CPD is broadly structured to support evidence-informed learning mechanisms, its impact may be shaped by how well it balances organisational goals with individual teacher needs and by the coherence between what is offered, experienced, and valued.

7.1.4   Mode of CPD delivery

The findings point to the possibility of a generally strong culture of PD across post-16 education settings, though this may vary by context, with all providers offering face-to-face CPD and enabling staff to pursue self-selected learning, provided it aligns with organisational priorities. This dual approach supports both structured and self-directed professional growth, offering flexibility while maintaining strategic coherence.

A particularly significant finding is the integration of action research as a form of self-directed CPD. Identified by 42% of CPD leads, this practice aims to enable teachers to explore interventions applied to their specific contexts, aligning closely with several evidence-informed CPD mechanisms, particularly action planning (mechanism 12), self-monitoring (mechanism 13), and context-specific repetition (mechanism 14). Sharing results at CPD events and conferences adds further value, promoting practical social/peer support (mechanism 7), professional validation (Boodt and Pullen, 2025), and enhanced teacher confidence (Brown and Everson, 2019). Involving ITE trainees in practitioner research such as a digital research group at one FE college (case study 1), reflects a commitment to embedding inquiry-led practice early in career development.

Internal conferences hosted by all CPD providers and some post-16 organisations, mainly FE colleges, represent another important facet of the post-16 CPD landscape. These events support knowledge exchange, celebrate success, and create opportunities for collaboration and reflection. Their design aligns with key CPD mechanisms such as praise/reinforcement (mechanism 5) and practical social/peer support (mechanism 7), while also fostering a sense of belonging, which is linked to teacher motivation, engagement, and retention (Booth *et al.*, 2021). However, while these are all important elements that support behaviour change, they must be integrated into a coordinated and balanced approach aligned with Sims *et al.'s* (2021) CPD framework in order to effectively drive change. These practices may be more prevalent in FE colleges due to their HE provision, which helps forge a connection with HE, where a research-informed and conference-oriented professional culture is more established. It is also possible that teachers from the other settings attend CPD provider conferences and so these events are not included as part of their organisation's CPD offer. Both these CPD practices point to the emergence of a more networked model of PD in some contexts.

The emphasis on practitioner research, knowledge sharing, and internal celebration suggests that CPD in these settings is evolving beyond compliance-driven models toward a more collaborative, inquiry-led culture. This has the potential to not only deepen professional learning but also to strengthen professional identity and agency within the post-16 sector.

7.1.5   Focus of CPD

The data reveal a clear emphasis on generic pedagogical CPD across post-16 settings, covering areas such as active learning, assessment, questioning techniques, student autonomy, and feedback. This underscores the ongoing role of CPD in keeping teaching staff up to date with core teaching strategies that support classroom effectiveness, a priority aligned with both long-established pedagogical research (Desimone, 2009; Kennedy, 2016) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2025) emphasis on teaching quality as a key determinant of student outcomes. Survey data also support this focus, identifying teaching and learning quality processes (89%) and achievement data (74%) as the primary drivers of CPD content. However, the comparatively limited focus on subject-specific pedagogy, suggests a potential area of missed opportunity, particularly in light of Ofsted's expectations (Ofsted, 2020) and the well-established

importance of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986; Bostock, 2019). While nearly half of CPD leads (49%) identified subject-specific pedagogy as a CPD priority, only 20% of teachers agreed, highlighting a notable perception gap. This divergence is especially marked in SFCs, where just 2% of teachers reported access to subject-specific CPD, pointing to a potential need for greater alignment between CPD planning and teachers' experience.

Several factors may account for this discrepancy. The generic as opposed to subject-specific nature of ITE may lead to blurred distinctions between generic and subject-specific CPD post-training. In some cases, generic CPD delivered within subject teams may naturally incorporate subject relevance, reducing the perceived need for separate provision. Additionally, subject-specific development may occur informally, through team discussions, shared practice, or incidental learning, which might not be recognised as CPD by teachers (Rogers, 2014). Structural factors, such as small subject teams in post-16 settings can limit the feasibility of delivering tailored, subject-specific CPD. However, despite these contextual factors, the overall underrepresentation of subject-specific CPD may indicate a broader structural gap within the 16–19 CPD landscape. This is significant given that CPD is most impactful when it aligns with teachers' subject expertise and is directly applicable to classroom practice (Hustler *et al.,* 2003; Goodall *et al.,* 2005; Loy, 2024). Addressing this gap may enhance both teacher confidence and student outcomes, especially in vocational areas where content knowledge is central.

In contrast, areas such as digital skills, AI, and green skills are evident in some settings, which may reflect a recognition of the need to equip teachers with competencies aligned with contemporary global challenges, including technological change and climate action (Ventista and Brown, 2023). While these themes remain less prominent in school-based post-16 provision, their presence in FE colleges and SFCs suggests a sector responding to future-oriented demands. The inclusion of teacher well-being in some CPD offers, though still relatively uncommon also merits attention, as it may indicate an emerging recognition of the pressures faced by staff, particularly in FE. Given established links between CPD engagement and teacher retention (Patrick *et al.,* 2010; Shanks *et al.,* 2012; Tyler *et al.,* 2024), well-being-focused CPD may be a valuable tool for improving staff morale and reducing attrition in a sector facing workforce challenges.

Overall, the findings highlight a CPD landscape that is well-established in supporting general pedagogy but less developed in meeting subject-specific learning needs. Expanding access to relevant, subject-tailored CPD, particularly in small or specialist departments, could better align professional learning with teachers' day-to-day practice and enhance the impact of CPD across the post-16 sector.

7.1.6   Time for CPD

The findings reveal a notable discrepancy between CPD leads' and teachers' perceptions of time allocated for additional CPD beyond INSET days. While 87.2% of CPD leads reported that this time is formally provided (most commonly one hour per week or five hours per month) only 67% of teachers said they received it. This gap in perception suggests a disconnect between setting policy and practice, in other words, what is formally allocated compared with what is realistically experienced by teachers. As stated earlier, it may also be a different interpretation of Inset days and allocated time. Interview data support this interpretation, with CPD leads acknowledging that lack of time remains a persistent barrier to teacher engagement in self-directed CPD. Teachers frequently face high workloads and competing responsibilities, such as marking, pastoral care, and administrative tasks, which may take precedence over professional learning during non-teaching time. As a result, teachers may, in practice, divert time formally allocated for CPD toward these more immediate tasks.

This reflects wider research (e.g. Loy, 2024), which highlights how both the quantity of time available and the cognitive space needed for deep professional reflection are frequently compromised in high-pressure working environments. The implications are significant: without protected, meaningful time for CPD, particularly for self-directed or exploratory learning, teachers may struggle to engage with professional learning in a sustained or purposeful way, limiting the overall impact of CPD provision. Moreover, this disconnect can affect teacher morale and trust in organisational support. If staff perceive that CPD time is not truly accessible well-intentioned PD strategies may lose credibility. Ensuring CPD time is not only allocated but also protected and valued within workload planning is therefore, critical. This may involve setting clearer expectations around the use of CPD time, minimising competing demands, and promoting a culture that prioritises professional learning as core to the teaching role, not as an optional or extra task.

In conclusion, although the data reflect a clear organisational commitment to supporting teacher development through allocated time, the persistent mismatch between teacher experiences and CPD lead perceptions highlights a critical structural barrier. If not addressed, this disconnect risks significantly undermining both the effectiveness and equitable access to CPD across the post-16 sector.

7.1.7   Follow-up support for CPD

Survey responses from CPD leads suggest that most providers implement structured follow-up processes that align with the 14 mechanisms of effective CPD. The most commonly reported forms of support included revisiting material from CPD content at a later date (66.3%; mechanism 2), coaching or mentoring (59.6%; mechanism 7: practical social/peer support), and setting goals and self-monitoring (52.8%; mechanisms 3 and 13). Additionally, 33.7% of CPD leads reported providing one to one feedback sessions (mechanism 8). In contrast, only 7.9% of CPD leads stated that no follow-up support was offered, compared to 21.4% of teachers, indicating a notable perception gap between CPD leaders and teaching staff regarding the accessibility or visibility of follow-up processes.

Teacher survey responses, however, revealed a different pattern of follow-up experience. The most frequently cited forms of follow-up support were self-monitoring (mechanism 13) and feedback from line managers (mechanism 8). Goal setting (mechanism 3) and peer support via coaching or mentoring (mechanism 7) were ranked lower, appearing in third and fifth place, respectively. This divergence may suggest inconsistencies in how follow-up is communicated, delivered, or understood by staff. It may also reflect a broader issue of informal or embedded support not being recognised as structured CPD, highlighting the need for greater transparency and shared understanding around the aims and mechanisms of follow-up activities.

Analysis by provider type revealed some variation in the level and nature of follow-up support reported by teachers. FE colleges were more likely to offer structured follow-up such as coaching/mentoring (40.6%), goal setting and monitoring (35.9%), and self-monitoring (42.1%). This contrasts sharply with teachers from SFCs who reported lower levels of coaching/mentoring (16.3%) and slightly higher rates of self-monitoring (46.9%). Schools with sixth form provision showed comparatively lower levels of support with coaching/mentoring (29.3%) and self-monitoring (24.1%).

This variation suggests that teachers' experiences of CPD follow-up vary depending on their organisation. FE colleges appear to offer more structured and embedded support systems, whereas staff in SFCs and schools with sixth form provision may receive less comprehensive follow-up. Given that structured follow-up activities such as coaching, mentoring, and goal setting are linked to improved teaching practice, PD and confidence, and job satisfaction (Hobson *et al.,* 2009; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Wang and Odell, 2002), levels of such support in relation to teaching effectiveness, staff morale, and retention, particularly for early career or less experienced teachers who may require more guidance should be reflected upon across setting types. The relatively high rate of self-monitoring in SFCs suggests a more autonomous model of CPD, however, it is important to balance this with structured organisational support to maximise effectiveness.

7.1.8   CPD for vocational teachers compared with English and maths or teachers of other academic subjects

- Little difference between CPD for vocational teachers, as compared with English and maths or teachers of other academic subjects.

- Around 43% of post-16 settings include Industry Days as CPD for vocational teachers to retain currency of their industry skills.

Interview data indicate that, aside from Industry Days, which are offered in 43% of settings, there is limited differentiation in the in-house CPD provided for vocational teachers compared to their academic peers. This trend is echoed in the survey data, although some divergence in perception is evident: 32% of CPD leads reported that vocational teachers receive distinct CPD, compared with 37% of teachers who stated the same. This may reflect a broad organisational focus on universal teaching practices that transcend subject areas. While such an approach can promote consistency and shared learning across departments, CPD must also support vocational teachers in maintaining industry relevance, developing practical teaching skills, and navigating dual professionalism (the blend of teaching and industry expertise). Vocational

teachers are expected to balance these dual roles, and without sustained industry engagement, their ability to deliver relevant, up-to-date training may be compromised. Industry Days are recognised for their role in supporting retention among vocational staff (Tyler *et al.,* 2024). Strengthening this aspect of CPD could therefore, enhance both the quality of vocational provision and workforce stability in the sector.

One FE college CPD lead reported a strategic shift away from subject-based CPD toward a whole-college model, to promote cross-curricular collaboration, encourage sharing of effective practice and minimise the risk of it becoming siloed within specific departments. By supporting the dissemination of teaching strategies across disciplines, this approach may help cultivate a more collaborative culture and contribute to greater pedagogical consistency. However, deprioritising subject-specific CPD may inadvertently limit vocational teachers' opportunities to engage deeply with discipline-specific pedagogies and remain current with industry developments, both of which are critical for effective vocational teaching. A more balanced approach may be needed, combining general pedagogical training with targeted vocational CPD to support dual professionalism and sector-specific demands.

Neither the schools nor the ITPs interviewed in this review encourage staff to engage in industry-related CPD, and half the SFCs did not either, likely reflecting the more academic orientation of their post-16 provision. Additionally, post-16 settings report offering very little targeted in-house CPD for English or maths specialists. This may reflect the availability of externally funded CPD programmes specifically aimed at supporting teachers of these subject areas, driven by national policy initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for students resitting GCSE English and maths (DfE, 2014). One such programme is explored in detail in case study 6.

7.1.9   Responsibility for designing and selecting CPD programmes

- Senior managers with a remit for quality or teaching and learning are responsible for organisational CPD.

- Some managers are supported by dedicated teams with expert knowledge or teaching skills to design and deliver CPD.

In all settings, senior leaders or managers hold overall responsibility for designing CPD programmes, underscoring the strategic importance placed on CPD within these settings. Senior leadership involvement helps ensure that CPD aligns with the broader goals and priorities of the organisation, such as improving teaching quality, enhancing student outcomes, and responding to policy shifts.

Managers are supported by designated teams, sometimes with a quality remit, which include expert teachers and advanced practitioners from a range of subject areas. These individuals are frequently called upon to design and deliver CPD within their areas of expertise. Having a pool of 'experts' to draw on when designing CPD was also a feature of many externally developed CPD programmes. This aligns with mechanism 4 (credible source), which highlights the importance of respected, knowledgeable facilitators in fostering teachers' trust and engagement with CPD. Experts are more likely to provide practical, context-specific insights, which can be immediately applicable in the classroom and consequently teachers are more likely to perceive this CPD as useful and effective (Hustler *et al.,* 2003).

The involvement of designated teams with a quality remit suggests a structured approach to ensuring the effectiveness of CPD. These teams likely support quality assurance, evaluate impact, and contribute to a continuous cycle of improvement. This approach could also help align CPD with both organisational goals and individual teachers' needs. The use of in-house expertise for CPD design and delivery may also reflect a preference for more tailored, context-specific PD that directly addresses the challenges faced by teachers in the setting. Additionally, this approach may enhance sustainability by reducing dependence on external providers, lowering costs, and increasing flexibility. At the same time, it functions as a form of capacity building by empowering expert teachers and advanced practitioners to take on leadership roles in professional learning thereby, embedding CPD more firmly within the organisation's culture.

7.1.10   CPD budget

Interview data revealed that all participating settings maintained a centrally held CPD budget, ranging from £30,000 to £100,000, depending on the organisational size. This variation also reflects differences in organisational capacity and strategic priorities. Notably, one FE college reported supplementing its central budget with external funding sources, such as the national Teacher Mentoring Programme.[10] This proactive approach to securing additional resources demonstrates a commitment to innovation and could serve as a model for other settings, particularly those facing financial constraints.

However, findings from the CPD lead survey presented a more complex picture. While 57% reported the presence of a centralised CPD budget, 15.6% indicated the use of departmental budgets, and 11.7% reported no defined budget at all. This discrepancy between interview and survey data may reflect differences in awareness or understanding of budget structures among CPD leads. It also raises important questions about the transparency and consistency of CPD funding mechanisms within and across organisations.

The absence of a clearly defined CPD budget in some settings presents a potential barrier to equitable access to CPD. Without dedicated funding, opportunities for PD may become inconsistent, relying on informal arrangements or discretionary support. This risks creating disparities in staff development experiences, particularly between departments or campuses within larger organisations.

Encouragingly, 71% of interviewed CPD leads and 55.3% of survey respondents reported that individual teachers or teams can request CPD funding. This responsiveness to individual and team-level needs supports a more personalised and needs-driven approach to PD. Such practices align with research highlighting that self-directed and contextually relevant CPD is more likely to lead to meaningful improvements in teaching practice (Kyndt *et al.,* 2016; Goodall *et al.,* 2005).

7.1.11 Sources of evidence to inform in-house CPD

- Quality assurance processes are the most commonly cited source of evidence.

- Majority of CPD lead survey responses identified student outcomes as a common source of evidence, differing from interview data with CPD leads.

The findings indicate that in-house CPD development across settings is largely informed by internal quality assurance processes. All CPD leads interviewed, and 89.1% of survey respondents, reported using processes such as learning walks, lesson observations, and SARs. While these are valuable tools for identifying general teaching trends and staff development needs, they may provide limited insight into the direct impact of CPD on student learning outcomes. A notable disparity emerged between the survey and interview data on this point: 73.9% of CPD leads in the survey reported using student outcomes to inform CPD planning, yet only 14% of CPD leads interviewed (one from an FE college and one from a MAT), cited student outcomes as a data source. This gap suggests a potential weakness in the CPD planning feedback loop. Aligning CPD with student performance metrics enhances accountability and fosters a stronger feedback cycle for improving teaching practice and organisational effectiveness, since effective CPD is closely linked to improved teaching quality and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond *et al.,* 2017). Without consistent use of student data to shape or evaluate CPD, the sector risks missing opportunities to demonstrate the effectiveness of CPD's impact and its return on investment. In an environment increasingly focused on measurable outcomes, this disconnect could undermine the strategic value of CPD and challenge efforts to secure sustained or increased funding.

Further analysis by provider type reveals variations in how evidence informs CPD planning. Some CPD leads in FE colleges and SFCs reported incorporating student voice and staff surveys, reflecting a more participatory and context-sensitive approach that emphasises organisational culture, stakeholder engagement, and responsiveness to staff and learner needs. Such practices could be regarded as sector-leading and merit wider dissemination to promote consistency and innovation. However, the decentralised and varied nature of CPD planning also carries risks: while locally tailored approaches can

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[10] See: https://cognitionmentoringprogrammes.com/.

enhance relevance, they may fail to meet broader accountability expectations if not grounded in a wide range of evidence sources. Striking a balance between autonomy and standardisation is therefore, essential.

Interestingly, only a small number of CPD leads interviewed referenced Ofsted requirements, legal obligations, or national student outcomes as drivers for CPD design. This contrasts with survey data, where professional body requirements (72.8%) and government policy (47%) were identified as common influences. The limited focus on external standards in the interview data may indicate either a prioritisation of organisational needs or a lack of clarity on how policy expectations inform CPD practice.

Ultimately, for CPD to be both impactful and justifiable, it must be designed using a comprehensive evidence base, which may include:

- internal quality assurance processes (e.g. observations, learning walks);

- student outcomes and performance data;

- teacher voice and feedback;

- student voice and experience;

- professional and regulatory standards; and

- policy and sector-wide developments.

Greater integration and transparency in how these data sources are used could help ensure that CPD is more targeted, accountable, and effective in supporting both teacher development and student success.

7.1.12 Comparison of teachers' and CPD leads' perceptions of CPD

- CPD leads and teachers have different views on how teachers are supported to engage in CPD.

- Time is cited by interviewed CPD leads as a barrier to take-up of CPD.

- CPD leads and teachers have different perceptions regarding follow-up support after CPD activities.

CPD leads and teachers differ in views on support for CPD engagement, with time cited by CPD leads as a key barrier. They also have contrasting perceptions of follow-up support after CPD. While both agree on the general CPD structure and types, discrepancies exist in delivery mode, time allocation, and pedagogical focus, affecting CPD's effectiveness and value.

7.1.13 Format and delivery of CPD

Both groups describe CPD as a mix of formal and informal activities, including structured sessions, self-directed research, and peer models. This shared perception suggests a sector-wide commitment to varied and flexible CPD models intended to meet diverse professional needs (Cordingley *et al.,* 2015). However, CPD leads report mostly face-to-face CPD during work hours, whereas 50.8% of teachers say CPD is mainly online and done in their own time. This discrepancy could reflect unclear boundaries between supported and optional CPD and may affect teacher motivation and perceptions of organisational support (Loy, 2024; Opfer and Pedder, 2011).

7.1.14 Focus of CPD: Generic versus subject-specific CPD

Most teachers (71.8%) and CPD leads (89.1%) say recent CPD emphasises generic pedagogical strategies, reflecting wider national trends prioritising general improvements in teaching quality (EEF, 2021). However, fewer teachers (19.9%) than CPD leads (48.9%) perceive subject-specific CPD, indicating it may be under-delivered or poorly communicated. This is especially problematic for vocational teachers needing practical, subject-aligned CPD (Kennedy, 2016). A focus on generic pedagogy risks disengagement and limited impact if teachers feel that CPD lacks direct application to their day-to-day

practice (Lucas *et al.,* 2012). Effective CPD must be content-specific and relevant, with clear signposting and integration into broader strategies (Darling-Hammond *et al.,* 2017; Korthagen, 2010). Building in opportunities for team-based, practice embedded inquiry may also support this goal while fostering collaboration and shared expertise (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008).

Additionally, only 16% of teachers versus 35.9% of CPD leads report well-being-focused CPD, suggesting a communication gap about CPD content. This underscores the need for better feedback, teacher involvement in planning, and clearer communication of CPD goals. Well-being support could be enhanced by encouraging teachers to set goals (mechanism 3), plan actions (mechanism 12), and self-monitor progress (mechanism 13).

7.1.15   How teachers select CPD

As outlined in the findings, a clear disconnect exists between CPD leads and teachers regarding how CPD is selected and the level of teacher agency involved. This misalignment raises concerns about the extent of teacher influence over their PD. Such concerns are critical, as teacher autonomy, motivation, and perceived relevance are key to effective CPD (Kyndt *et al.,* 2016). Empowering teachers to pursue contextually relevant learning supports mechanism 1 (cognitive load) by connecting learning to prior knowledge and practice (Lawrence and Hall, 2018).

Only 6.8% of teachers reported engaging in CPD independently in their own time, compared to 29.8% of CPD leads who believed this was occurring. This gap raises questions about realistic and equitable expectations for out-of-hours CPD and may reflect a broader undervaluing of informal learning. As Eraut (2004) notes, informal learning plays a vital yet often invisible role in PD. Without recognition of this form of learning, monitoring systems risk underestimating teachers' development and overlooking opportunities to build on self-directed, practice-based learning. Overall, these divergent perceptions are significant as they point to a disconnect between organisational intentions and teachers lived experiences of CPD. Without a shared understanding of how CPD is accessed, selected, and experienced, there is a risk that PD becomes less effective, less engaging, and ultimately less valued by those it is intended to support. These mismatches suggest structural and cultural misalignments within CPD systems. If CPD leads base decisions on assumptions that do not reflect the day-to-day realities of teachers, CPD risks becoming detached from the needs, preferences, and realities of staff. For CPD to be effective, organisations must ensure that systems not only provide opportunities for directed and self-directed learning but also that those opportunities are clearly communicated, equitably accessed, and perceived by teachers as meaningful and contextually appropriate.

7.1.16   Follow-up support

There is a notable disconnect between CPD leads' perceptions and teachers' experiences regarding follow-up support after CPD activities. CPD leads may overestimate its frequency or impact, or the support may not be perceived as meaningful by teachers. This is important, because ongoing dialogue, reflection (self-monitoring), and feedback are essential for embedding professional learning into practice. Encouraging self-monitoring increases teachers' awareness of their actions and outcomes, helping to build more effective habits (EEF, 2021). Without clear and consistent follow-up, CPD risks becoming detached from everyday teaching, limiting its long-term effectiveness.

This disconnect might also explain why 67% of teachers feel they lack sufficient time to fully engage with CPD. Without protected time for reflection or application, and with limited or informal follow-up, CPD risks being seen as a mere formality rather than a valuable developmental opportunity. These findings highlight broader issues around how CPD time is defined, understood, and prioritised within workloads. These issues are significant as they risk weakening CPD's impact. Without intentional and visible follow-up, CPD can become disconnected from daily teaching, limiting sustained improvement, and reducing the effectiveness of key mechanisms like feedback, reflection, and cognitive reinforcement, which are all crucial for embedding learning and fostering behavioural change.

To maximise its impact, CPD must extend beyond initial participation to include ongoing, embedded support that helps teachers apply and refine their learning within their specific teaching contexts. This includes praise and reinforcement (mechanism 5) continued instruction and scaffolding (mechanism 6), practical social/peer support (mechanism 7) from peers and leaders and timely, constructive feedback (mechanism 8). Together, these mechanisms support the embedding

of new practices (mechanism 14), ensuring that CPD leads to meaningful change. Without this sustained and coherent approach, CPD is unlikely to realise its transformative potential.

7.2   Output 2

This section examines the findings from Output 2, beginning with the light-touch analysis of 90 externally developed CPD programmes, followed by a detailed analysis of the nine CPD programmes featured in the case studies (Appendix 3), and concluding with a comparison of the two data sets. It assesses how effectively the 14 mechanisms are embedded, focusing on core features of CPD that directly enhance teaching practice, which is a key indicator of effectiveness (Desimone, 2009). By drawing on both the broad and in-depth analyses, the discussion contrasts the implementation of these mechanisms in external provider developed versus in-house CPD and considers the implications for designing and delivering effective 16-19 PD.

7.2.1   Comparing integrations of CPD mechanisms: Insights from 90 programmes

All 14 mechanisms outlined by Sims *et al.* (2021) were found to be present across the 90 CPD programmes analysed, demonstrating that these mechanisms are feasibly implementable across diverse CPD contexts in the post-16 education sector. However, the consistency of implementation varied. In some instances, mechanisms could only be inferred rather than explicitly verified due to the limited information publicly available. For example, collaborative activities such as rehearsing teaching strategies (mechanism 10) suggested the likely presence of feedback (mechanism 8), although this was not always explicitly stated.

7.2.2.   Frequency of mechanism evidence

Managing cognitive load (mechanism 1), credible source (mechanism 4), and instruction (mechanism 6) were most frequently evidenced, indicating an emphasis on information delivery and theoretical grounding. These were closely followed by goal setting (mechanism 3), modelling of techniques (mechanism 9), rehearsal (mechanism 10), and prompts and cues (mechanism 11). In contrast, revisiting material (mechanism 2) was the least commonly evidenced, particularly in short duration programmes (up to two hours), and this is likely due to time constraints reducing opportunities for review and consolidation.

Given that learning is a cyclical process (Timperley *et al.,* 2007) involving ongoing reflection, adaptation, and reinforcement, CPD programmes should provide opportunities for teachers to revisit content and rehearse new strategies so that they become embedded in practice. This can be achieved through sessions that promote active engagement and include structured follow-up tasks, revisited in future sessions. This approach aligns with the EEF recommendations for effective PD (EEF, 2021).

7.3   Case study insights: Externally developed CPD programmes

7.3.1   Variation in implementation of CPD mechanisms

Case studies 4, 5, and 6 reveal how different externally developed CPD programmes vary in their emphasis and implementation of the 14 mechanisms, reflecting diverse design priorities and contextual needs.

Case study 4 (online CPD for T Level teachers) emphasised rehearsal (mechanism 10) by promoting reflective practice, motivation, and credible source (mechanism 4) through the application of educational theory. Peer interaction (mechanism 7, practical social/peer support) was facilitated through online discussion forums, aligning with Cordingley *et al.* (2015), who highlight the importance of collaborative, evidence-informed professional learning. The reflective workbooks encouraged action planning (mechanism 12) and self-monitoring (mechanism 13), highlighting the importance of ongoing practice following CPD (Desimone, 2009).

Case study 5 (Maths CPD for GCSE/Functional Skills teachers) demonstrated strong implementation of instructional techniques (mechanism 6), rehearsal (mechanism 10), and practical social/peer support (mechanism 7) through

collaborative tasks and active learning. The programme's use of gap tasks in between sessions and final presentations supported context-specific embedding of practice (mechanism 14) and action planning (mechanism 12), resonating with Desimone's (2009) model of active learning and ongoing practice, while also supporting self-monitoring (mechanism 13) through continuous reflection.

Case study 6 (CPD for apprenticeship assessors) emphasised self-directed learning and managing cognitive load (mechanism 1). Although opportunities for modelling new teaching strategies (mechanism 9) were limited, the programme incorporated structured reflection and self-assessment tasks. A teacher's capacity to reflect on and refine their practice plays an important role in improving teaching (Hattie, 2009), underlining the importance of goal setting (mechanism 3) and action planning (mechanism 12) in CPD programmes.

These examples illustrate how the three externally developed CPD programmes tailored the 14 mechanisms to specific audiences and goals and reveal variability in the inclusion of mechanisms such as modelling and peer support, both of which are important components of effective CPD (Sims *et al.,* 2021). To optimise impact, CPD programmes should aim for a balanced inclusion of mechanisms, ensuring a combination that supports insight, motivation, techniques, and embedded practice.

7.3.2   Individual versus collaborative learning opportunities

All three case studies included reflective and self-assessment practices in supporting individual professional growth, aligning with mechanism 12 (action planning) and mechanism 13 (self-monitoring) in Sims *et al.'s* (2021) framework. However, the degree of collaborative learning varied across the programmes. Case study 4 facilitated peer dialogue and interaction through online platforms, and the active learning approach in case study 5 promoted collaborative learning, while case study 6 provided few opportunities for shared learning.

This variation reflects an uneven integration of social learning mechanisms, particularly mechanism 7 (practical social/peer support to maintain behaviour change) and mechanism 8 (feedback). Given the strong evidence that effective PD provides space for teachers to collaborate (Cordingley *et al.,* 2015; Darling-Hammond *et al.,* 2017), CPD programmes should embed structured opportunities for peer interaction, co-construction of knowledge, and joint reflection.

The analysis shows that the 14 mechanisms of effective CPD are broadly applicable and evident within the post-16 education sector. However, their implementation is uneven, with some mechanisms underutilised or not clearly evident.

Key implications for practice include:

- increasing emphasis on mechanisms that support long-term learning, such as revisiting material and feedback loops;

- ensuring CPD programmes include a balance of both individual and collaborative learning strategies; and

- tailoring CPD programmes to specific professional contexts while maintaining the core principles and effectiveness of established CPD mechanisms.

7.4   Case study insights: In-house CPD programmes

7.4.1   Prevalent forms of CPD in post-16 settings

Drawing on insights from the detailed case studies, it is evident that CPD programmes across post-16 education settings share several common characteristics, despite differing in scale, delivery methods, and strategic focus. While each programme is shaped by contextual factors such as setting size, student demographics, and organisational priorities, certain elements recur across the different setting types.

Most notably, all settings reviewed adopt a blended model, combining structured, whole-organisation CPD with more focused, department-led or subject-specific sessions. Common to all settings is an emphasis on using evidence from quality assurance processes, such as learning walks and appraisals, to guide CPD content, alongside a strong culture of collaboration fostered through team or department-based learning. These shared practices suggest a possible consensus around the value of PD that is sustained, evidence-informed, and tailored to the unique demands of individual settings.

7.4.2   CPD models in FE colleges

Each model reflects its setting's educational remit, with vocational integration, teacher agency, and curriculum control varying accordingly. When compared:

- Case study 7 (large SFC) offers the most context-responsive and morale-supportive approach.

- Case study 8 (small SFC) is theoretically rich but less robust in terms of embedding and feedback.

- Case study 9 (MAT) is highly centralised and consistent, prioritising performance metrics and standardisation.

7.4.3   INSET days

All FE case studies refer to full-day CPD events strategically placed throughout the academic year. These often feature themed content (e.g. case study 1) and parallel sessions that enable personalisation and choice. Sessions typically involve rehearsal (mechanism 10), action planning (mechanism 12), and follow-up through self-monitoring (mechanism 13), or performance review to reinforce learning over time (mechanism 5).

7.4.4   Short-form CPD

Shorter, more frequent sessions, such as 'Stop the Clock' (case study 1) or the weekly 'Golden Hour' (case study 3), focus on single topics like questioning techniques or formative assessment. These help manage cognitive load (mechanism 1), enable material to be revisited (mechanism 2), and promote context-specific rehearsal (mechanism 14). They are often based on training needs analyses and are responsive to emerging organisational priorities, supporting practical social/peer support (mechanism 7) through collaborative learning and a feedback-rich culture (mechanism 8).

7.4.5   Collaborative CPD

Strategies like teaching triangles and research groups promote peer-to-peer learning and cross-college collaboration. These approaches encourage practical social/peer support (mechanism 7) and repeated, context-relevant practice (mechanism 14), helping embed effective strategies into daily teaching.

7.5   CPD approaches in SFCs and a MAT

7.5.1   Case study 7: SFC within an FE college group

This setting combines academic and vocational CPD within a large FE college group serving a disadvantaged community. It includes INSET days, weekly departmental meetings, and a dedicated 'Development Week'. CPD is highly responsive to quality assurance data and departmental needs, with a strong focus on rehearsal (mechanism 10), practical social/peer support (mechanism 7), and contextualisation through Industry Days. Staff are empowered to personalise CPD, supporting mechanisms such as self-monitoring (mechanism 13) and embedding practice (mechanism 14).

7.5.2   Case study 8: SFC

This smaller, academically focused SFC uses INSET days and half-termly 70-minute CPD modules. The approach emphasises pedagogical theory (e.g. Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction, Rosenshine, 2012), supports goal setting (mechanism 3) and managing cognitive load (mechanism 1), and includes sequenced revisiting of material (mechanism 2).

However, it offers fewer opportunities for rehearsal (mechanism 10), feedback (mechanism 8), or sustained action planning (mechanism 12).

7.5.3   Case study 9: MAT

The MAT's centralised CPD model prioritises curriculum fidelity and consistency across 39 schools. CPD aligns with assessment cycles and includes shared resources and teaching models. It features mechanisms such as modelling (mechanism 9), instruction (mechanism 6), and standardised rehearsal (mechanism 10), with structured practical social/peer support (mechanism 7) via subject networks. However, this uniformity may limit teacher autonomy and responsiveness to individual contexts.

7.6   Impact of setting context on CPD design

Contextual variables, such as organisation size, levels of deprivation, and learner complexity, strongly influence CPD models. The larger settings (case studies 1, 2, 3, and 7), which are also in areas of high deprivation, offer CPD that is wide-ranging and includes topics such as generic pedagogies, assessment practices, well-being, and vocational CPD. These settings manage diverse curricula and frequently integrate vocational CPD, such as Industry Days as an important component of their CPD offer. This reflects the principles outlined by Cordingley *et al.* (2015) and the Skills for Jobs White Paper (DfE, 2021), which emphasise the importance of relevance (mechanism 1: cognitive load), collaboration (mechanism 7: practical social/peer support), and sustained practice (mechanism 10: rehearsal).

In contrast, the more academically focused, smaller SFC featured in case study 8, offered more structured, research-informed (mechanism 4: credible source) CPD based on cognitive frameworks like Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (Rosenshine, 2012) and Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). It is important to note that CPD in all settings was evidence-based. While rigorous, highly structured CPD models may be less flexible and able to respond to emerging needs or embedding new practices, MATs (case study 9), with their emphasis on standardisation and quality assurance, reflect national strategies such as the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy (DfE, 2019) and insights from Greany and Higham (2018), who highlight the need for consistency in large-scale educational delivery.

The SFCs in case studies 7 and 8 show that CPD content is grounded in well-established educational theories, such as constructivism or direct instruction, aligning with mechanism 2 (credible source) and is tailored to focus on enhancing subject-specific knowledge and teaching skills, reflecting mechanism 14 (context-specific repetition). While department-led and grounded in research, such as Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) and Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (Rosenshine, 2012), they integrate rehearsal (mechanism 10) through approaches that integrate theory and practice (mechanism 9: modelling), which support teachers to embed learning in their practice (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008).

In contrast, the CPD model used by the MAT in case study 9 prioritises curriculum alignment, consistent instructional practices within departments across the MAT, and aligned assessment approaches. Centralised CPD delivery can support standardised teaching approaches and shared resources across the network. Though this model may limit flexibility, it aims to guarantee equitable learning experiences, aligning with Ofsted's (2024) priority for a coherent and sequenced curriculum.

7.6.1   Variation in implementation of CPD mechanisms

When analysed through the lens of Sims *et al.'s* (2021) 14 mechanisms, the case studies reveal key similarities and differences in how various settings structure CPD to promote sustained improvements in teaching practice. While all case studies incorporate elements of the four core domains—Instil insight, Motivate goals, Teaching techniques, and Embed practice—they vary in emphasis and coherence, which has important implications for impact and sustainability.

Across all settings, the 'Instil insight' domain is generally well addressed. Mechanisms such as managing cognitive load (mechanism 1) through specifying and sequencing content progressively are consistently evident, aligning with cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) and Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (Rosenshine, 2012). Case study 1 offers focused, 40-minute sessions with a single digital tool, which limits overload and encourages immediate application. Similarly, case study 2 spreads CPD across a full academic year with tracks that have a specific focus and bite-sized videos that support

knowledge retention and gradual development. Case study 3 blends INSET days with weekly CPD sessions, allowing for repeated engagement with key topics (mechanism 2: revisit material). In this way, CPD activity is sustained over time, making it more effective (DfE, 2016; Sims *et al.,* 2021). In the SFC featured in case study 7, CPD session content is divided into four focused areas, with reflection tasks ensuring relevance and contextualisation. Similarly, the smaller SFC in case study 8 structures CPD over multiple sessions throughout the year, supporting manageable learning chunks. CPD in case study 9 (MAT) includes curriculum-focused sessions that sequence content around assessment cycles, ensuring clarity and consistency of teaching across all the schools in the MAT. These approaches suggest that well-structured and progressive content delivery is feasible across diverse settings.

However, the 'Motivate goals' mechanisms, particularly goal setting (mechanism 3), show more variation in the CPD materials analysed. The materials for all cases demonstrate that CPD is firmly grounded in well-established theoretical models and evidence such as Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) and the Great Teaching Toolkit (Coe *et al.,* 2020) (mechanism 4: credible source). Additionally, the FE colleges in case studies 1, 2, and 3 all actively promote individualised and strategic goal setting. For instance, in case study 2, teachers select a CPD track, set personal goals (mechanism 3), and engage in ongoing reflection, while the FE college in case study 3 uses training needs analyses to inform action plans that are revisited with line managers (mechanism 5: praise/reinforce), similar to the appraisal process in case study 1. This alignment ensures CPD is not an isolated activity but connected to wider organisational aims, reflecting research that identifies autonomy and ownership as drivers of professional growth (Kyndt *et al.,* 2016). In contrast, the SFC in case study 7 demonstrates only a short-term goal setting within a single session and there is no clear evidence of structured follow-up, though this does not necessarily mean it is not happening. The SFC in case study 8 identifies general session aims but does not include mechanisms to promote teacher autonomy or personalised planning. Meanwhile, the MAT in case study 9 focuses almost exclusively on standardisation and consistency, which, while ensuring uniformity, limits teacher agency in a one-size-fits-all approach, which is a concern raised in some policy critiques (Teacher Development Trust, 2015). Although collective goal setting can be valuable, without mechanisms that promote ownership and link CPD to broader organisational and individual goals, teachers may not fully engage or apply learning in meaningful ways.

In the 'Teaching techniques' domain, which covers the mechanisms of instruction, modelling, rehearsal, and feedback, implementation is strongest in settings where expert facilitation and continuous improvement through repetition, reflection, and refinement are prioritised. In this area, case studies 1, 2, and 3 again stand out. Case study 1 combines direct instruction (mechanism 6) and in-session rehearsal (mechanism 10) with practical social/peer support (mechanism 7) through teaching triangles. The use of coaches and peer collaboration in case study 3, and the structured tracks with peer discussions and modelling in case study 2, reflect principles advocated by Hobson (2020), demonstrating the importance of coaching and feedback to increase transfer of learning into practice. These strategies also echo DfE (2016) guidance, which promotes collaborative inquiry, where teachers work together to investigate and improve teaching and learning, and modelling as part of high-quality CPD. In contrast, the SFC in case study 8 includes modelling (mechanism 9) through curated videos, for example, Teach Like a Champion, but provides no evidence of structured rehearsal or feedback mechanisms. This is important because the inclusion of theory alone is insufficient without active, supported practice and feedback, which are core to effective teacher development (EEF, 2015). In contrast, case study 9 (MAT) integrates modelling and discussion through standardisation activities, but feedback remains implicit. These differences suggest that the presence of modelling and rehearsal varies significantly across in-house CPD, which has implications for supporting teachers to transfer learning to their teaching practice and for promoting sustained improvements in teaching and learning (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008).

Perhaps the most significant disparities are found in the domain of 'Embed practice', which includes mechanisms such as action planning (mechanism 12) for implementation, self-monitoring (mechanism 13), and context-specific repetition (mechanism 14) to embed learning into practice. The settings in case studies 2 and 3 have embedded CPD into organisational planning cycles and quality assurance frameworks, which aligns with the DfE's (2016) recommendation that effective CPD must be integrated into wider organisational systems. Case study 2 also supports implementation through virtual platforms and personalised projects that facilitate sharing and self-monitoring throughout the year. Case study 1 encourages reflection and action planning (mechanism 12) via peer networks and performance reviews, though this may be less frequent and systematic than the track system used in case study 3. In contrast, the SFCs in case studies 7 and 8 offer little evidence of explicit follow-up mechanisms or structured opportunities for review. While the CPD culture in case study

7 empowers teachers to self-monitor, the lack of formalised follow-up means this may not take place. The setting in case study 8 encourages lesson planning post-CPD but does not incorporate repetition or structured feedback. Case study 9 (MAT) reinforces practice through standardisation tasks, which also serve as rehearsal and reflection activities, yet does not explicitly foster individual adaptation or long-term planning. These findings suggest a need to include mechanisms for implementation, repetition, and self-monitoring to enhance and fully embed learning from CPD activity.

In summary, while all settings demonstrate engagement with elements of the Sims *et al.* (2021) framework, case studies 2 and 3 exhibit the most comprehensive and coherent application across all domains. They offer models of CPD that balance structured delivery with flexibility, encourage ownership, and integrate reflection and repetition. Conversely, case studies 7 and 8 highlight the challenges of sustaining CPD impact without deliberate alignment to all 14 mechanisms, especially in embedding practice (mechanism 14) and motivating personalised goal setting (mechanism 3). Although these may still occur informally, without clear mechanisms in place, the effectiveness of CPD may be limited. CPD is more effective when it is designed as a continuous, context-specific process that is responsive to both organisational priorities and individual teacher needs (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008).

7.6.2   Comparative analysis of key findings from Stage 1 and Stage 2 of Output 2

The analysis of both the nine in-depth case studies and the broader dataset of 90 CPD programmes reveals that all 14 mechanisms identified by Sims *et al.* (2021) are present across the post-16 education sector. However, there is considerable variation in how clearly, consistently, and explicitly these mechanisms are implemented. In the case studies, mechanisms were generally more explicitly documented and purposefully integrated, particularly in well-structured programmes that included reflective workbooks, gap tasks, and collaborative activities. These elements helped make the mechanisms more visible and intentional. In contrast, in many of the 90 programmes, particularly the shorter ones, the mechanisms were more implicitly embedded within activities, rather than clearly articulated. For example, feedback (mechanism 8) could be assumed to be occurring during peer interaction or collaborative work, even if it was not explicitly mentioned.

Across both the case studies and the wider dataset, the most consistently and clearly evidenced mechanisms were goal setting (mechanism 3) and the use of credible sources (mechanism 4). This suggests an emphasis on measurable outcomes by encouraging participants to set clear professional goals, and alignment with credible, evidence-based sources. In the case studies, these mechanisms were frequently embedded through reflective exercises, planning tasks, references to educational research, or expert-led delivery.

Conversely, across both the case studies and the light-touch analysis, mechanisms such as praise/reinforcement (mechanism 5), feedback (mechanism 8), and self-monitoring (mechanism 13) often appeared in implicit forms, such as reflective tasks, peer collaboration, or structured self-assessment activities. This highlights a common challenge in evaluating CPD: while key mechanisms may be embedded in practice, they are not always explicitly documented or intentionally designed into programmes.

Rehearsal (mechanism 10) emerged as a particularly notable point of comparison. In the case studies, rehearsal was actively supported through structured exercises, such as practising teaching techniques or presenting lesson plans. This was particularly prominent in multi-session programmes, where teachers had the opportunity to practise and build on their learning over time. Conversely, while this mechanism was also observed in the broader sample, it was often inferred rather than explicitly described. For example, in a two-hour CPD session focusing on improving reading in functional skills English, teachers are asked to apply course content to plan strategies to help students overcome challenges with key reading skills, suggesting rehearsal, without labelling it as such.

Context-specific repetition (mechanism 14) was the least consistently evidenced mechanism across both the case studies and the broader dataset. While occasionally observed in the case studies through subject-specific tasks or lesson planning, it was rarely labelled or clearly articulated. Within the 90-programme dataset, its low visibility likely reflects both the limitations of public reporting and the high prevalence of short, one-off sessions that reduce opportunities for sustained repetition or contextual embedding.

Programme duration and structure were key factors influencing how well and how explicitly the different mechanisms were included. The case studies included several long-term or multi-session programmes, that naturally supported deeper integration of mechanisms such as revisiting material, rehearsal, and sustained peer support. In contrast, 69% of the 90 programmes lasted two hours or less, limiting opportunities to incorporate mechanisms such as rehearsal, ongoing feedback, and sustained reflection that rely on extended engagement over time.

Finally, delivery format, whether face-to-face, online, or blended, also shaped how mechanisms were incorporated. The case studies showed that all formats can effectively support mechanism use when carefully designed. For instance, peer support, interaction, and collaboration were supported in online programmes using discussion forums, and through real-time problem-solving and active learning tasks in face-to-face sessions. A similar pattern was also evident across the broader dataset: mechanisms were observed across all formats, though their implementation varied. Modelling (mechanism 9), for example, was sometimes delivered through instructional videos, while feedback could be offered in asynchronous discussions or structured in-session activities.

8.   Conclusion and recommendations

This practice review explored current CPD practice across a range of post-16 education settings, including FE colleges, SFCs, ITPs, and schools with sixth form provision. Using a mixed-methods research design comprising surveys, interviews, and secondary analysis of CPD programmes, the review aimed to generate evidence-based insights to inform an upcoming guidance report by the EEF on the key characteristics of effective CPD for post-16 practitioners. The review comprised two components. The first included two national surveys targeting CPD leads and teachers and interviews with CPD leads and CPD providers. The second comprised a light-touch review of 90 publicly available examples, followed by an in-depth analysis of nine CPD programmes selected from across the different post-16 settings in scope. The analysis was guided by Sims *et al.'s* (2021) framework for effective CPD.

The findings of this review reveal that while the post-16 CPD landscape is marked by innovation and diversity, inconsistencies in design, delivery, and impact limit its full potential. CPD delivery is varied, encompassing face-to-face, online, and self-directed formats, with INSET days across the majority of settings and in some settings, CPD topics are delivered over multiple sessions spread throughout the academic year. CPD leads reported a strong reliance on in-house CPD, valued for its cost-effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability. This is typically centrally designed by senior leaders drawing on internal evidence derived from a range of sources (see section 5.4.1, p. 53) In contrast, externally developed CPD tends to incorporate more direct teacher feedback and is often influenced by government priorities and funding streams.

In-house CPD primarily emphasises generic pedagogical approaches, with limited subject-specific content, except in FE colleges, where Industry Days aim to help vocational teachers maintain subject expertise. Well-being-focused CPD is present but was evident in only a minority of settings reviewed. While most institutions operate with centralised CPD budgets, transparency and equitable access remain inconsistent, and the funding models of external CPD providers can limit participation for smaller or less well-resourced settings.

Follow-up support, such as coaching and goal setting, is critical for sustaining improvements in teaching practice, yet these supports are inconsistently experienced by teachers. This variability, coupled with notable discrepancies between teachers and CPD leads regarding autonomy in CPD selection, access to protected time, and the provision of follow-up support, highlights gaps in the effective leadership and organisation of CPD. Addressing these issues requires more inclusive planning, transparent funding, and processes that better align CPD delivery with teachers lived experiences and professional needs.

To enhance CPD in post-16 education, this review used the 14 evidence-informed mechanisms for effective PD identified by Sims *et al.* (2021) as a foundation for targeted, forward-looking recommendations. While many current CPD programmes incorporate several of these mechanisms, those related to developing teaching techniques are the most consistently and explicitly applied. In contrast, mechanisms aimed at supporting motivation, goal setting, and the sustained embedding of professional learning into practice are often implicit or insufficiently addressed, indicating key areas for enhancement.

8.1   Recommendations

Based on the review's findings, the following 13 recommendations may serve as a foundation for making CPD more transparent, evidence-informed, and responsive to teacher needs, potentially ensuring that it is not only better designed but also more meaningfully experienced.

1. **Strengthen line management communication.** Open, ongoing dialogue between line managers and teaching staff about CPD expectations and opportunities may play a vital role in fostering shared understanding, aligning PD with individual and organisational goals, and ensuring that CPD is experienced as relevant and supportive rather than top-down or compliance-driven.
2. **Increase transparency in CPD processes.** Teachers need clear, transparent information about CPD expectations, selection, approval, and prioritisation. Without this, they may feel excluded or uncertain, which could undermine their agency and engagement, potentially reducing CPD's effectiveness. Organisations should clearly

communicate the availability of protected CPD time, follow-up support, and well-being resources to address understanding gaps. Such transparency may promote fairness and boost teacher engagement with CPD.

3. **Recognise informal learning and set realistic CPD expectations.** Informal and self-directed learning, such as reading, peer discussions, or online exploration, can often be overlooked in formal CPD reporting. This highlights a potential need to better acknowledge informal learning while avoiding assumptions about unpaid out-of-hours CPD. Organisations should prioritise accessible CPD opportunities within working hours which could promote equity and sustainability.

4. **Involve teachers in CPD planning.** Involving staff in needs assessments, planning, and evaluation can help ensure it reflects staff priorities and fosters a sense of ownership. Drawing on lesson observations, learning walks, student outcomes, and staff feedback ensures CPD is purposeful, relevant, and responsive. This collaborative approach may also address underrepresented priorities, particularly subject-specific pedagogy and well-being.

5. **Ground CPD in credible, evidence-based sources.** To ensure alignment with current best practice, CPD programmes should consistently draw on credible, evidence-based sources, including educational research and expert input (mechanism 4: credible source), and designed with cognitive science in mind (mechanism 1: manage cognitive load). Core teaching strategies may be taught through direct instruction (mechanism 6), explicit modelling (mechanism 9), feedback (mechanism 8), and rehearsal (mechanism 10). Short, focused sessions with clear objectives, supported by retrieval practice (mechanism 2) and spaced repetition, could promote long-term learning and behaviour change.

6. **Include more subject-specific CPD.** Teachers consistently report that CPD that is tailored to their subject or vocational context is underrepresented. By focusing on relevant content, subject-specific reduces cognitive load (mechanism 1) (Sims *et al.,* 2021) and may support teachers to apply learning to their teaching context so that it becomes embedded in their practice (mechanism 14: context-specific repetition). For vocational educators, it also strengthens dual professionalism by linking teaching with evolving industry practices. Aligning CPD with these needs enhances its perceived relevance and impact.

7. **Make CPD mechanisms explicit.** Mechanisms like feedback (mechanism 8)*,* rehearsal (mechanism 10), and self-monitoring (mechanism 13) are often implied but not explicitly identified, which can make it harder for participants to engage with them deliberately and for evaluators to assess their impact. Explicitly identifying and clearly describing the activities and intended mechanisms in programme documentation could enhance clarity, support evaluation, and enable replication.

8. **Use multi-session formats.** CPD should be delivered over multiple sessions whenever possible; this could better allow time for reflection, feedback, and iterative practice, supporting rehearsal (mechanism 10) and context-specific repetition (mechanism 14), which are rarely present in one-off events, and can lead to deeper, sustained learning. CPD activities should also include prompts and cues (mechanism 11) to support transfer to practice.

9. **Foster reflective, collaborative practice.** Follow-up support can be key to embedding and sustaining practice changes. To strengthen follow-up, organisations could expand coaching, peer observation, and revisit sessions to ensure CPD is meaningfully integrated into daily practice. Collaborative structures such as teaching triangles, coaching, or communities of practice could offer mutual accountability, practical social/peer support (mechanism 7), and sustained development. Embedding reflective tools such as workbooks, or goal-setting frameworks (mechanism 3), or action planning templates (mechanism 12) can deepen engagement and progress monitoring (mechanism 13), while also making learning more visible. Recognition through feedback and praise (mechanism 5) can foster motivation which may ultimately support professional growth.

10. **Clarify feedback and rehearsal opportunities.** CPD programmes should consider explicitly defining and structuring opportunities for feedback (mechanism 8) and rehearsal (mechanism 10), rather than assuming they happen naturally. Clarifying when and how these mechanisms are expected to occur may enhance their effectiveness in supporting application of learning from CPD activity.

11. **Embed learning in context-specific practice.** CPD activities should include opportunities to revisit learning (mechanism 2) within subject- or setting-specific contexts to support context-specific repetition (mechanism 14) and manage cognitive load (mechanism 1). Context-specific repetition was the least consistently visible mechanism across the dataset, particularly in short-form CPD yet, it can be critical for embedding learning and supporting transfer to practice. CPD designers should therefore, integrate tasks that require repeated application of content in relevant, authentic settings to potentially strengthen long-term impact.

12. **Adapt mechanisms to delivery format.** CPD mechanisms should be intentionally integrated into the delivery mode (face-to-face, online, or blended). The case studies demonstrate that all delivery formats can effectively support key mechanisms when intentionally designed. For instance, online forums can enable peer support (mechanism 7) and feedback (mechanism 8), while modelling (mechanism 9) can be delivered via instructional videos or live demonstrations. Tailoring strategies to the delivery format can ensure mechanisms are clearly embedded and consistently applied across contexts.

13. **Improve documentation for evaluation.** To support evaluation and continuous improvement, CPD documentation should clearly describe activities and the mechanisms they target. Many mechanisms were observed to be present in practice but not documented explicitly, making it difficult to assess impact or replicate success. Greater transparency in design may enhance accountability, support evaluation, and facilitate more consistent implementation across the sector.

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Appendix 1: Survey

Question number	Question	Question response options	Logic
N/A	If you consent to taking part in the research please click the 'Consent' option below	I consent- I do not consent	Skip to End of Survey if 'I do not consent' is selected
Q1	Which of the following options below best describes your role in your organisation?	I organise professional development for teachers of 16–19 provision in my organisation- I teach 16–19 provision in my organisation	
Q2	What type of provider do you work in?	- FE College- Sixth Form College- Independent Training Provider- School Sixth Form- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q3b	Do you organise professional development for (tick all that apply)	The whole organisation- 16–19 provision- Subject / Vocational area- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q4	What is your role within your organisation? (tick all that apply)	Academic Subject Teacher- Vocational / Technical Subject Teacher- Initial Teacher Educator- Programme Leader / Head of Department- Course Leader- Expert Teacher / Teaching and Learning Coach- Quality Lead- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q5	Please specify whether your organisation designs and delivers its own internally developed professional development programmes for staff, delivers externally developed programmes (including both paid and free options), or offers both. Indicate your approach for the following professional development formats	[Note: This question requires a matrix format; respondents leave blank if not offered. Specific options not detailed in survey text.]	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q6	In the past 18 months, what has been the focus of your organisation's internally developed 16–19 professional development activities? (tick all that apply)	Generic pedagogies (e.g. assessment, active learning etc.)- Subject specific pedagogy- Subject specific content- Mandatory training required by government or awarding body regulations (e.g. health & safety, safeguarding etc.)- Personal mental health and well-being - Student mental health and well-being- My organisation does not develop its own professional development activities- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q8	What sources of evidence are drawn on when selecting professional development activities for teachers of 16–19 provision? (tick all that apply)	Professional body recommendations (e.g. ETF, SET, industry professional bodies)- Government policies- Student satisfaction data / feedback- Student outcomes (e.g. achievement data)- Staff requests- Staff satisfaction surveys- Staff feedback on previous professional development activities- Teaching and learning quality assurance processes (e.g. observations)- Academic research- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD Lead block)
Q9	After professional development activity for teachers of 16–19 provision has taken place, does your organisation offer any follow-up support as part of the wider professional development offer? (tick all that apply)	Revisiting the topic at a later date- One to one follow-up and review with staff- Goal setting and review- Peer support- Coaching / Mentoring- We don't offer any follow-up support as part of the wider professional development offer- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q9b	Who is responsible for designing internally developed professional development programmes for teachers of	Senior leaders- Expert Teachers / Teaching and Learning Coaches- Initial teacher educators- Quality leads- Other (please specify)	Display if Q6 'My organisation does not develop its own

Question number	Question	Question response options	Logic
	16–19 provision in your organisation? (tick all that apply)		professional development activities'
Q10	Is professional development for teachers of 16–19 provision in your organisation different for technical/vocational teachers compared to teachers of academic subjects?	Yes (please specify how) - No	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q11	Do staff teaching 16–19 provision receive a dedicated amount of time to engage in professional development activities?	Yes- No	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q7	Is there scheduled time allocated for professional development for teachers of 16–19 education? If so, when is it typically scheduled?	Weekly (please specify when) - Designated professional development days at the start or end of each term- Monthly- Every half term- There is no time allocated for professional development for teachers of 16–19 education- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q7b	On average, how much time do teachers of 16–19 education receive to engage in professional development activities? (please choose one option and state the time)	Per week (please specify how much time) - Per month (please specify how much time) - Per term (please specify how much time) - Per year (please specify how much time)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q11d	On average, how many INSET / whole-organisation training days are provided at your organisation per academic year?	1- 2- 3- 4 or more	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q11e	When do inset / whole organisation training days take place at your organisation?	At the start of each term- At the end of each term- Both- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q12	Does your organisation provide any statutory professional development activities for teachers of 16–19 provision?	Yes- No	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q12b	What are the statutory professional development activities for staff teaching 16–19 provision?	Health and Safety- Prevent- Safeguarding- Education for Sustainable Development- Equity, equality, diversity and inclusion- IT/Cybersecurity- Fire awareness- Other (please specify)	Display if Q12 = 'Yes'
Q13	Do staff have the opportunity to choose their own professional development activities, outside of both compulsory training, and INSET / whole-organisation or departmental activities?	Yes- No	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q13b	When choosing their own professional development activities, how do staff select them? (tick all that apply)	Staff select from an approved list- Staff are directed to specific professional development by their line manager- Staff research professional development they want to do and request it- Staff do this independently in their own time- I don't know	Display if Q13 = 'Yes'
Q14	Are staff required to set targets and draw up an action plan to implement their learning from professional development activities?	- Yes- No- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q14b	How is this action plan monitored? (tick all that apply)	Line manager- Self-monitored- Other (please specify)	Display if Q14 = 'Yes'

Question number	Question	Question response options	Logic
Q16	How does your organisation support staff to undertake professional development activities?	Staff are given time to complete professional development activities- Staff are offered financial support to pay for professional development activities- Staff are not supported to undertake professional development activities- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q79	What form does this financial support take? (tick all that apply)	All staff are given a set amount each year to spend on their own professional development- Staff must apply for funding for professional development and are offered financial support to pay for professional development activities- Staff receive partial funding for work-related specific professional development- Staff receive full funding for work-related specific professional development- Staff receive partial funding for general professional development such as a masters or doctoral study- Staff receive full funding for general professional development such as a masters or doctoral study- Staff receive partial funding for advanced vocational qualifications- Staff receive full funding for advanced vocational qualifications- Staff do not receive funding for professional development activities- Other (please specify)	Display if Q16 = 'Staff are offered financial support to pay for professional development activities'
Q15b	Please indicate whether or not staff receive the following support to implement their learning from professional development activities	[Note: This appears to be a matrix question; specific options not detailed in survey text.]	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q17	How do you evaluate the usefulness of professional development activities for teachers of 16–19 provision? (tick all that apply)	Staff evaluations/feedback- Higher standards of teaching- Improved student satisfaction with teaching- Improved student outcomes- We don't evaluate them- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q18	Do you have professional development providers that you commonly use / engage with?	Yes- No	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q18b	Why do you regularly use these providers of professional development?	Training is well-delivered- Training is relevant- Positive feedback from staff- Other (please specify)	Display if Q18 = 'Yes'
Q19	Do you have a defined budget for professional development activity over a year?	Yes, the whole professional development budget is held centrally, and my team approves all spend- Yes, my team holds some budget for whole organisation activities, and in addition, departments hold their own professional development budgets- Yes, all budgets are held at departmental level- Yes, each individual staff member has a set amount of budget to spend on professional development- Yes, another arrangement, please specify - No	Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q19b	What effect does the budget arrangement have on the delivery of professional development?	Most professional development delivery is at departmental level- Most professional development delivery is at whole organisation level- Most professional development delivery is to individual staff members, with limited central and departmental professional development- Another effect (please describe)	Display if Q19 ≠ 'No'
Q20	Do you have any other comments about professional development for teachers of 16–19-year-olds in your organisation?		Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)

Question number	Question	Question response options	Logic
Q21	Thank you for completing this survey. If you would like to find out more about the work of the EEF and are happy for them to contact you, please leave your email address below.		Only for respondents who organise PD (PD lead block)
Q22	What type of provider do you work in?	FE College- Sixth Form College- Independent Training Provider- School Sixth Form- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q24	What do you teach? (tick all that apply)	Academic subject- Vocational / Technical subject- Maths- English- Initial Teacher Education- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q25	How is professional development organised within your setting? (tick all that apply)	Structured programmes with specified learning outcomes- Informal activities (e.g. they don't have specified learning outcomes or lead to target setting or monitoring)- Online programmes staff complete in their own time- A year-long programme of multiple, individual discrete professional development events- A series of workshops focusing on a single topic, conducted over several days, weeks, or months- Action research- Peer observations- Teaching squares / triangles- Coaching / mentoring- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q26	Are there specific 16–19 professional development activities for:	[Note: This question appears incomplete in the provided text; specific options not detailed.]	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q27	In the past 18 months, what has been the focus of your organisation's professional development activities for teachers of 16–19 provision? (tick all that apply)	Generic pedagogies (e.g. assessment, active learning etc.)- Subject specific pedagogy- Subject specific content- Mandatory training required by government or awarding body regulations (e.g. health & safety, safeguarding etc.)- Personal mental health and well-being- Student mental health and well-being- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q29	Do you have the opportunity to choose your own professional development activities?	- Yes- No	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q29b	When choosing your own professional development activities, how do you select them?	I select from an approved list- I am directed to specific professional development by my line manager- I research professional development I want to do and request it- I do this independently in my own time and so don't notify my organisation- Other	Display if Q29 = 'Yes'
Q30	As a teacher of 16–19 provision, do you receive a dedicated amount of time to engage in professional development activities (e.g. webinars, research, further qualifications)?	Yes- No	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q30b	On average, how much time do you receive to engage in professional development activities? (please choose one option and state the time)	Per week (please specify how much time) - Per month (please specify how much time) - Per term (please specify how much time) - Per year (please specify how much time)	Display if Q30 = 'Yes'
Q30d	On average, how many INSET / whole-organisation training days are provided at your organisation per academic year?	1- 2- 3- 4+	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)

Question number	Question	Question response options	Logic
Q30e	When do INSET / whole-organisation training days take place at your organisation?	At the start of each term- At the end of each term- Both- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q31	Does your organisation provide any statutory professional development activities for staff teaching 16 - 19 provision (e.g. Safeguarding/Prevent, Health & Safety)?	Yes- No	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q32	What professional development programmes have you engaged in during the past 18 months? (tick all that apply)	Generic pedagogies (e.g. assessment, feedback, active learning etc.)- Subject specific pedagogy (how to teach my subject)- Subject specific content (e.g. syllabus content)- Mandatory training resulting from government (e.g. health & safety, safeguarding, awarding body training etc.)- Personal mental health and well-being- Student mental health and well-being- English and maths- Education for sustainable development- Equity, equality, diversity and inclusion- Using AI in teaching- Other (please specify)	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q33	Are you required to set targets and draw up an action plan to implement your learning from professional development activities?	Yes- No	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q33b	How is this action plan monitored? (tick all that apply)	With my line manager- I monitor it myself- I have a coach/mentor who monitors it with me- Other (please specify)	Display if Q33 = 'Yes'
Q35	Does your organisation support you financially to undertake professional development activities?	Yes- No	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q35b	How does your organisation support you financially to undertake professional development activities? (tick all that apply)	All staff are given a set amount each year to spend on their own professional development- Staff must apply for funding for professional development and are offered financial support to pay for professional development activities- Staff receive partial funding for work-related specific professional development- Staff receive full funding for work-related specific professional development- Staff receive partial funding for general professional development such as a masters or doctoral study- Staff receive full funding for general professional development such as a masters or doctoral study- Staff receive partial funding for advanced vocational qualifications- Staff receive full funding for advanced vocational qualifications- Staff do not receive funding for professional development activities- Other (please specify)	Display if Q35 = 'Yes'
Q34b	Please indicate which of the following support options you receive to implement your learning from professional development activities (tick all that apply)	Peer support / buddy- Revisiting learning through follow-up sessions- Coaching / mentoring- Goal setting and monitoring- Positive reinforcement (e.g., during meetings with line manager / mentor)- Feedback from line manager/mentor- Self-monitoring- Action planning- I do not receive any support to implement learning from professional development activities	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q36	Overall, how useful have you found 16–19 professional development activities in your organisation over the last 18 months?	Very useful- Quite useful- Neither useful nor not useful- Not very useful- Not useful	Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)

Question number	Question	Question response options	Logic
Q36b	Thinking about the professional development you found useful, what made it useful? (tick all that apply)	It built on my current knowledge and teaching skills in a manageable and informative way- It was evidence-based and drawn from trusted sources- It motivated me to act upon the practices I was learning, using approaches such as setting goals, and providing positive affirmation- It helped me develop my teaching techniques in a range of ways such as through feedback, modelling, rehearsal, peer support- It supported me to use the new practices I learned, such as through action planning, self-monitoring, or resource implementation- It was relevant- Other (please specify)	Display if Q36 = 'Very useful' or 'Quite useful'
Q27	Thinking about the professional development you found not to be not very useful, what made it not very useful? (tick all that apply)	There was too much content, leading to information overload- It wasn't evidence-based or supported by research- It wasn't relevant to my teaching- There were no examples showing us how to apply what we were learning about- It didn't build on my current knowledge and teaching skills- There was no follow-up support to help me implement my learning- Other (please specify)	Display if Q36 = 'Not very useful' or 'Not useful'
Q38	Do you have any other comments about professional development for teachers of 16 –19-year-olds in your organisation?		Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)
Q39	Thank you for completing this survey. If you would like to find out more about the work of the EEF and are happy for them to contact you, please leave your email address below		Only for respondents who teach 16–19 provision (Teacher block)

Appendix 2: Interview schedules – Output 1

CPD provider interview schedule

What does CPD look like for teachers in post-16 settings? (RQ 1a)

Structure of CPD programmes (RQ 1a, Mechanism 3)

1. What is the range of your CPD offer?

   Prompts: To what extent are these formal qualifications and what is the range (e.g. Level 2 - Level 7)? Are there entry requirements? Do your CPD programmes require participants to set goals? Are your CPD programmes accredited? If mixed, what proportion would you say are formal vs informal (e.g. webinars, podcasts, case studies etc to promote self-directed CPD)?

2. What key factors do you consider when designing CPD? (RQ 1d)

   Prompts: How do you decide what CPD teachers need? What do you base your decisions on? (grassroots up, top-down, DfE guidance) prompt: How do you identify topics for your CPD offer? How do you ensure quality?

3. What format do they take? Why? Are they online, face-to-face, blended, webinars, asynchronous, self-directed study? (RQ 1a)

   Prompts: How do you decide what mode of delivery is best suited for the CPD? How do you balance any funding implications of different options?

4. Across the range of CPD offered, what is the range of time and duration commitments expected from teachers? (RQ 1a, potential barriers to take-up of CPD)

   Prompt: Does your CPD offer include discrete and longer-term programmes, or programmes that revisit learning from previous programmes? What are the facilitators and barriers around this? How many hours' CPD do you think teachers should have?

Content and delivery

5. How does your CPD align to career progression? (RQ 1a)

   Prompts: vocational teachers and teachers of academic subjects, advanced practitioners, English and maths CPD for different roles and experience levels within FE?

6. How does your CPD offer differ across subjects taught in FE, and types of provision? (RQ 1b)

   Prompts: are there different programmes for vocational teachers and teachers of academic subjects, advanced practitioners, English and maths CPD?

7. Who designs and delivers them? (RQ 1c, Mechanism 2)

   Prompts: FE teaches, HEIs, teacher educators, managers, external consultants, etc. What are the typical qualifications/experience expectations for this?

Funding

8. How are your CPD programmes funded? Do you receive government subsidies to offer certain programmes, and does the development of those differ to those developed solely by your organisation? (potential barriers to take-up of CPD)

Prompts: [If not answered above, are these in particular subjects e.g. English and maths; leadership and management? Do in-house programmes (e.g. delivered in-person to a team at one college) attract different fees or subsidy?

9. What is the range of fees that members and non-members might pay for your CPD programmes? Does this differ by funding type i.e. do subsidies allow you to reduce the cost?

    Prompts: What proportion are free? Do in-house programmes (e.g. delivered in-person to a team at one college) attract different fees or subsidy?

10. For chargeable CPD, to what extent do you feel that is a barrier to participation?

    Prompts: Are you able to offer reduced fees for those in different circumstances?

Marketing and take-up

11. How do you market your CPD offer?
12. Which are the most/least popular CPD programmes for a) individuals b) provider types? Why do you think that is? What's the completion rate?
13. Who typically engages with CPD?

    Prompt: is it at an organisational, departmental, or individual level? Are there particular roles, or career stages? What are the motivations to engage with CPD?

14. Do you find particular setting characteristics (e.g. setting type, size, proportion of disadvantaged learners, etc.) correlate with the selection of specific programmes?

CPD lead interview schedule

About you and your organisation

1. Tell me about your organisation (contextual information affecting CPD priorities)

    Prompts: How many students aged 16–18? What proportion are disadvantaged e.g. from low-income backgrounds, in care, etc.? Last Ofsted grade.

2. What qualifications do you require your teaching staff to have? (e.g. Level 3 vocational qualification, PGCE/Cert Ed, etc.) Do you require them to have QTLS?

    Do you require your staff to have QTLS?

    (If yes) what support do you provide to staff whilst in-role to meet these expectations?

3. Tell me about your role in your organisation. (RQ 1c)

    Prompts: responsibilities, teaching (if yes, which subject)? How does it relate to CPD provision?

Timing and funding of CPD

4. When in the academic year does CPD typically take place? Why at these points? (RQ 1a)

    Prompts: how many days/hours? What is the standard amount?

5. Do you have a budget for CPD centrally? (potential barriers to CPD)

    Prompt: Do subject departments/individual teachers have separate budgets for CPD? How much is the budget? Is it based on the number of staff, or something else? Do you have freedom to spend a proportion?

Selecting CPD: Structure

6. Is there a setting-wide plan to CPD in terms of planning and objectives, or is it broken down by department or subject? (RQ 1a)
7. What key factors do you consider when selecting externally developed CPD, or designing in-house CPD activities? (RQ 1d)

    Prompts: policy/awarding body directives; achievement data; information on teaching and learning, student voice; staff fb etc.

8. Do you provide wrap-around support as part of the wider CPD offer, in addition to programmes staff are engaged in? (e.g., do you revisit content during the year; goal setting and review; mentoring/coaching) (Mechanisms 2, 3, 5, 8)
9. What mode of delivery does CPD in your organisation take? (RQ 1a)

    Prompts: Mandatory CPD? Online? Are they discrete events or do they take place over several sessions? Are they accredited? (Mechanisms 1 and 2)

Selecting CPD: Content

10. What has been the focus of CPD in the last 18 months? (RQs 1a, 1b)

    Prompts: teaching & learning approaches, assessment, AI, ESD, policy-related, English & maths, subject pedagogy

11. How is CPD different for vocational teachers, as compared with English and maths or teachers of other academic subjects? (RQ 1b)
12. Who is responsible for designing/ delivering CPD activities (in your plan)? (RQ 1c)

Prompts: organisational level, departmental level, externally developed programmes?

Staff and CPD

13. What are expectations around career progression and how does this relate to CPD approaches in your setting? (RQ 1a)

   Prompts: How do these influence approaches to CPD e.g., is it for career progression, improve teaching quality, increase content knowledge, meet performance standards across the college etc.?

How are staff supported to engage in CPD? (potential barriers to CPD)

   Prompts: reduced teaching timetable/ financial support/ promotion/ increased pay/mentoring programme?

14. Does this include informal CPD, e.g., attending webinars, CoPs external to the organisation/cross-organisation, peer observations etc.? How is this recorded? (Mechanisms 3, 7, 8, 12, 13)

15. Do staff have autonomy to select their own CPD? (potential barriers to CPD. RQ 1e)

   Prompts: if yes, do they have designated time? How much? Can they choose any CPD they like, or does it need to be approved?

16. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about CPD in your organisation?

Appendix 3: Case studies

Case study 1

Large FE college in the Midlands

Context: The organisation is a large general FE college in a deprived area of the East Midlands, with approximately 500 staff and 5,000 students aged 16–19, including some with high needs. The college operates across two sites and 16–18 provision includes apprenticeships, A Levels, vocational courses, T Levels, and STEPS provision for NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Provision is divided into schools, which comprise five- or six-related curriculum areas, such as vocational or academic. The college was graded 'Good' at their last Ofsted inspection.

How CPD is organised within the college

The college has five CPD INSET days with a specific focus during an academic year, as well as ad hoc 'Stop the Clock' time where staff have two hours CPD within their school to focus on a quality improvement need. This could include generic topics such as health and safety, and fire safety, or more subject-specific CPD.

Evaluation of CPD

The CPD featured in this case study is one of the five focused CPD INSET days. The focus of the day is digital and the CPD is in-house and involves all teaching staff across curriculum areas. There are 15 sessions for staff to choose from: 13 of these focus on using technology to enhance teaching, with each session focusing on a different digital tool. There is also one session that supports staff to streamline their digital workspace, manage administrative tasks more efficiently and store data safely. Interestingly, there is also a digital research group session where staff undertaking ITE at the college showcase their research into an Educational Technology (EdTech) tool. Each session lasts 40 minutes and staff must choose five to attend.

Instil insight: Each session focuses on one digital tool and how teachers can use it in their practice. For example, one session explores how to use Padlet to promote collaborative learning. In other sessions, teachers learn how to use Canva to create resources, 3D medical visualisation technology, virtual reality technology, or AI to enhance the student experience, improve accessibility, and reduce teacher workload. While teachers can attend any session they choose, there is a short description for each session, introducing the technology and briefly explaining how it can be used and where appropriate, in which subject areas. In this way, teachers can make informed choices about which sessions to attend and which digital tool they want to learn how to use. At 40 minutes long, session content has a narrow focus that is manageable and immediately applicable to some element of practice.

Motivate goals: The CPD topics and activities are chosen based on topics identified at whole organisation and departmental level during quality processes, such as the annual SAR and Quality Improvement plan, but also at individual level through a staff survey conducted by a cross-college staff working group.

The CPD programme is designed and delivered by the assistant principal responsible for the quality of teaching and learning, supported by a team of Teaching and Learning Quality leads (advanced practitioners) and teachers with specific relevant expertise. Sessions are explicitly underpinned by theory with a focus on empowering staff to become excellent teachers. To this end, each session includes a task requiring teachers to commit to implementing at least one aspect of their learning from the session into their teaching.

Teaching techniques: As stated above, all but one session focus on developing teaching techniques using a specific digital technology. Sessions include specific advice on how to use the digital tool, as well as direct instruction during the session for staff to familiarise themselves with its functionality. Practical peer support is built into sessions through group work and other strategies to promote a collaborative learning approach to CPD. The Teaching and Learning Quality leads team provide additional coaching and mentoring support, though this is according to staff need and aligned with career progression, rather than offering specific follow-up support after a CPD event. A system of teaching triangles where teachers meet

regularly to discuss a new approach they have been using in their teaching suggests that impact of the approaches is reviewed but this is not explicit in the programme resources analysed here.

Embed practice: The fact that individuals have autonomy to choose which sessions they attend means that it is likely they will choose those they believe will be most relevant and useful to them and that they will implement their learning in their future practice. This intention is conveyed through the strong practice-focus and description of each session in the CPD programme. Members of the digital practice research group are asked to conduct some practitioner research using an EdTech tool, which they then share as a market-place event session.

The college utilises a self-monitored PD plan where staff record what they have implemented from CPD events throughout the year and set themselves targets. This is shared with their line manager at the end of year.

Case study 2

Large FE college in a deprived area in London

Context: The organisation is a large general FE college in London. The college has four campuses and delivers vocational education for 16–18-year-olds, as well as adult provision, higher education, foundation learning, and apprenticeships. At the time of their last inspection, there were approximately 5,300 students enrolled at the college, of whom nearly 2,500 were in 16–18 provision. Nearly 7% of students have EHCPs and are in receipt of high-needs funding. Of these, 179 students study in the discrete high-needs provision (Horizons), 22 are on supported internship programmes, and the remainder of learners are on vocational programmes across the college. Although the college received a 'Requires Improvement' judgement at its last Ofsted inspection, it was deemed to have made 'Significant Progress' in its most recent monitoring visit.

How CPD is organised within the college

The college has 11 day-long CPD events during an academic year with five of those days together as a week. In addition, there is monthly CPD time—two hours on a Wednesday afternoon. Delivery of the programme is face-to-face and begins with introductory sessions during the week-long CPD days in August, continues during the year mostly during monthly CPD time with staff often split into smaller discussion groups, with regular reviews during day-long CPD training days throughout the year, ending with a final review day at the end of the academic year. Each month has specific activities, and CPD is delivered by staff within the organisation. All teaching staff, mostly but not exclusively teaching 16–19, are the target audience. As it is all delivered in-house, there is no cost to the organisation beyond staff time.

This year-long, in-house programme features six topics focused on different learner types and offers ten development tracks for teachers to choose from. These tracks cover both learning and improvement areas—for instance, behaviour management and planning, as well as professional qualifications like teaching certifications or ATS. Topics are tailored to specific learner groups, such as those with SEND or students in Level 3 and GCSE resit programmes. Each participant selects one track for the year, with the six topics intersecting all tracks. For example, a maths teacher might follow the behaviour management track with a focus on their GCSE resit learners. The structure encourages collaboration across departments around shared development goals during sessions.

Analysis of CPD against the 14 mechanisms

The full year in-house programme is being analysed here, with a focus on how the six topics and ten tracks function. As the day-long CPD days and the monthly two-hour sessions are integrated as a programme, they are all considered here. As above, the topics relate to different types of learners and the tracks are areas for development.

Instil insight: Each session is focused on one topic cutting across the different tracks to ensure teachers are focused on one area at a time. A full-year plan allows for reflection on changes made since the previous session, with dedicated reflection time usually incorporated into each subsequent session. Teachers are also encouraged to raise reflections in discussion groups.

Motivate goals: Each track has clear goals to enable teachers to identify what they want to learn and how they want to improve their practice, for example, by gaining a teaching qualification or improving their behaviour management. The focus and content of CPD are determined by areas for development identified by middle and senior leaders during learning walks, alongside other context-dependent priorities—for example, sessions planned in the summer to prepare for the following academic year. There is also a student voice survey three times a year, and any areas identified there could be adopted as CPD.

Teaching techniques: The ten groups reflecting the ten tracks are established for the year as individuals work within their tracks to share and improve practice. At each of the monthly CPD events, the track groups meet with a senior facilitator from the college to provide peer support. Staff are encouraged to try out new techniques or approaches, then come back and discuss them in groups. The teachers review the impact of the approaches, but it is seen as effective to have useful rather than only successful feedback, so a new technique having no impact is considered helpful feedback.

Specific bite-sized (15-minute) instruction sessions about new techniques or teaching approaches run regularly and are recorded so staff who are unable to make the session can review the material. Around a quarter of teachers regularly attend bite-sized sessions. These videos sit within each track so can be accessed together in groups or more likely individually, and then teachers can choose to try one of the new techniques or approaches as part of their track. They are a resource for teachers.

Embed practice: Individuals are asked to create their own project on a designated area of the organisation staff virtual learning environment within a track where they can reflect on the changes to their practice and their experience of testing a new technique or approach. This can be viewed by others in the organisation but only edited by the individual. These can be discussed during the track groups at the main CPD sessions, as well as being monitored by the individual. There is no approval needed for these projects – individuals develop them themselves, as long as they are practice-based, and focus in some way on teaching, learning, and assessment. They can use the approaches from the bite-sized videos or identify other ways to develop their teaching. Then they monitor the changes in their own practice and reflect on them.

Case study 3

Large FE college in a deprived area in Southeast Midlands

Context: The organisation is part of a large college group located in Southeast Midlands, serving over 15,000 students annually. Around two-thirds of these learners are on 16–18 provision, with approximately 550 high-needs students enrolled on specialist vocational pathways. The college operates across seven campuses and includes specialist land-based provision, a dedicated motorsport college, and adult learning centres situated in various community settings. It offers a broad curriculum of academic, professional, vocational, and technical courses for learners aged 16 and over, including T Levels and apprenticeships. The college was graded 'Good' at their last Ofsted inspection.

How CPD is organised within the college

The CPD programme is led by the Learning and Development team, which operates within the wider Quality Improvement team. Staff participate in two INSET days each year, in September and February, as well as a week-long CPD event at the end of the academic year. This includes seminars, well-being activities, workshops, and a centrally planned one-day conference that delivers whole-college messages and provides an opportunity for celebration. The INSET days cover a wide range of topics aligned to the college's key performance indicators, such as pedagogy, technology-enhanced learning and assessment, systems and processes, mandatory safety training, equality, diversity, and inclusion. INSET days are a mixture of externally sourced and internally developed programmes depending upon the expertise within the college group, the needs of the college, and the budget available.

In addition to these events, teaching staff are required to complete 30 hours of industry experience annually to maintain the relevance of their vocational knowledge. Another key element of the CPD programme is the 'Golden Hour', a weekly one-hour session designed to address individual and departmental development priorities throughout the academic year.

Analysis of CPD against the 14 mechanisms

While we have provided an overview of the CPD offered in the previous section, the CPD event presented here for analysis against the 14 mechanisms is the series of 'Golden Hour' CPD sessions.

Instil insight: Each 'Golden Hour' CPD session focuses on a specific topic with assessment for learning to allow teaching staff to revisit and build on topics throughout the year. For example, session one looks at questioning techniques, and in other sessions teachers learn about peer feedback and assessment, active learning techniques, and differentiation and adaptation to support learning. The CPD topics are aimed at all teaching staff within the organisation and managers with a learning, teaching, and assessment role. Teachers can attend any session, but the CPD leads work with the managers, and teachers complete a training matrix to identify which sessions would be most beneficial. Content from all-staff INSET days is revisited in future development days and 'Golden Hours' to explore what this means in practice at region/college/department/team/individual level. Teaching staff in the organisation who have a coaching role are utilised to support this process if needed and subject teams are also invited to decide on detail.

Motivate goals: Each CPD session has clear objectives to provide staff with an overview of the session and how it relates to their practice. Staff undertake an annual in-depth training needs analysis with department heads within the first term to identify individual developmental goals, to help them identify relevant CPD. This process enables managers to tailor 'Golden Hour' needs to the department requirements. In addition, and to complement the 'Golden Hour' CPD, staff can apply for funding to access one external CPD programme each year as mentioned in the context section. This enables a degree of autonomy and ownership of their CPD activity.

Teaching techniques: The college employs a range of learning and teaching coaches who work with the CPD lead to provide input on the topics identified. Within the CPD programme the sessions include building knowledge, revisiting topics, motivating staff, supporting staff, and embedding new practice and techniques. The 'Golden Hour' sessions are run by learning excellence coaches and advanced practitioners and allow staff to spend time reflecting on practice and learning new techniques for developing their craft. Reflection sessions have been built into the 'Golden Hour' schedule to allow for application to practice. Throughout the year other datasets, for example, student feedback, learning walks, and peer observations are used to identify any emerging needs allowing a proactive response to any emergent needs that differ to the agreed topics, demonstrating the relevance of CPD content. The staff conference at the end of the academic year provides an opportunity to celebrate good practice and recognise staff achievements during the year. These elements of good practice are sourced from outcomes and output from the 'Golden Hour' sessions, where staff have demonstrated improved practice as a result of the 'Golden Hour' CPD.

Embed practice: Learning from the CPD activities is embedded in a range of ways, including through the college appraisal process. The in-depth analysis conducted at the beginning of the year serves as an action plan that staff can use to identify relevant CPD activities. This is then reviewed with their line manager the following year. CPD sessions include opportunities to reflect, supporting staff to self-monitor their progress. The topics addressed in the 'Golden Hours' are reviewed in the following ways: monthly principals' meetings; fortnightly quality/learning excellence meetings; performance review meetings; business planning; SAR and Quality Improvement Plan; attendee feedback throughout the year; and three focus groups per year.

The college uses a range of metrics to identify the long- term impact of the activities and to identify future opportunities for staff, including staff appraisals and sharing of good practice at the staff conference.

Case study 4

External CPD provider

Context: The organisation has an online platform, offering a vast range of CPD programmes for the FE workforce, including for teachers of T Levels and apprenticeships, English and maths, and also leadership. This is one of the largest providers of CPD for the post-16 sector.

How CPD is organised

The CPD offer is commissioned and funded by the DfE and therefore, it is to be expected that it reflects policy priorities. The vast majority of their offer is unaccredited, apart from Professional Formation, leading to QTLS status, and the option to gain an ILM qualification through their leadership programmes for an additional fee. Their CPD offer is mostly online, although some programmes are also available as in-house sessions.

Analysis of CPD against the 14 mechanisms

The programme presented here is an online programme for teachers of T Levels and lasts three and a half hours.

Instil insight: The course information states that participants will 'explore the theories, approaches and methods that are integral to T Level teaching – from Bloom's Taxonomy to recontextualisation'. In addition, participants will learn about cognitivism, constructivism, metacognition, and flipped learning. Teachers could use all of these approaches in their own practice, and this is made explicit in the course information, demonstrating their relevance and thereby, reducing cognitive load.

Motivate goals: The course is strongly supported by policy and research, reinforcing its value and relevance, which is likely to enhance participant motivation. It references the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL, 2013) report and the NFER's Key Characteristics and Essential Elements of Teaching and Learning in Technical and Vocational Education (NFER, 2015). Additionally, other relevant research is cited, and a video by Dylan Wiliam, a prominent education consultant on assessment, is featured in the assessment and feedback section of the course. While there is a section on 'Encouraging Positive Behaviour' in students, which includes the use of praise to reinforce learning, there is no evidence that praise for teachers undertaking the programme is included until the 'Congratulations' element in the final section of the course, and teachers are also awarded a certificate on completion of the course.

Teaching techniques: Direct instruction on some key aspects relation to teaching vocational qualifications is given, including recontextualisation and functional competencies. Recontextualisation refers to how teachers modify curriculum content, teaching strategies, or professional knowledge to make them relevant and applicable to their specific teaching environment and student needs, whereas functional competencies relate to technical expertise, practical skills, and job-related knowledge. There is also a section on inclusive practice and signposting to further information, courses, and resources to encourage participants to continue their CPD beyond the course. Participants are encouraged to share their responses to questions with their peers via an online platform and also to reflect on their own practice, for example, 'Think about functional competence. How have you brought appropriate features of workplace practices into the context of teaching? Please share your thoughts and ideas with your fellow participants in the Comments section below'. This provides opportunities for peer support while also supporting participants to personalise learning to their teaching contexts. While there is no clear evidence of rehearsal of specific teaching approaches, teachers are encouraged to consider how they might apply and develop the new approaches they are introduced to on the course to enhance their practice.

Embed practice: Teachers are invited to reflect and share ideas on how they might 'flip' their T Level curriculum so that their students engage with theoretical content of their T Level course independently (e.g. through online resources or pre-recorded lectures) before applying it in structured classroom discussions or practical sessions. Prompts and cues are also provided via the 'Over to You' questions, for example, 'What methods do you currently employ to encourage, develop and consolidate industry-appropriate behaviours in your students? Please share your thoughts and ideas with your fellow participants in the Comments section below'.

Self-monitoring and action planning are supported using a 'Reflective Workbook', which contains activities, for example, 'Reflect on the characteristics of technical and vocational teaching described on the previous page'. Additionally, there are reflective and checking questions throughout the workbook. Teachers are instructed to set themselves short- and long-term targets relating to any part of this course using a list of key elements from the course provided as bullet points. Self-monitoring is also encouraged through a confidence check section asking teachers to rate their confidence levels at the beginning and end of the course and assess whether these have changed.

Case study 5

External CPD provider

Context: The organisation is a charity that seeks to enhance maths education and maths experiences across the FE sector. One element of the charity is a DfE-funded FE CPD programme for maths teachers, including GCSE and Functional Skills resit maths and general maths, such as A Level. The CPD has a strong focus on removing barriers to maths, including barriers maths FE teachers might have, to improve maths teaching in the classroom. One of the ways in which they seek to achieve this is to make the programme accessible in as many ways as possible in order to maximise its reach.

How CPD is organised

Teachers can access CPD on an individual-level or on organisational-level and content can be tailored to meet organisational goals, such as improving feedback or another specific aspect of teaching. CPD activities include in-house sessions where the team visit an FE organisation to deliver CPD for either a half-day or full day. These sessions include a lot of activities and collaboration between participants. Organisations can choose from a 'menu' of CPD activities, but these can also be customised for setting needs and contexts. Additionally, there is some online on-demand CPD where teachers can go in and work at things at their own pace, which is a lot more self-directed.

Analysis of CPD against the 14 mechanisms

The programme analysed here is CPD for teachers of GCSE maths resits. It takes place online over ten weeks and comprises ten two-hour live sessions. Sessions are recorded so teachers can access them repeatedly at their convenience.

Instil insight: This ten-week programme comprises seven different topics, each with a single focus, for example, ratio tables, bar modelling, so that teachers learn about one technique each time. The first topic, 'Proportion', is extensive and so is broken down into two sessions. Sessions use past exam questions, so that teachers are revisiting material they have already taught but learning new approaches that they will revisit multiple times in the future. Gap tasks in-between sessions require teachers to revisit session content by trying out the technique and reflecting on its impact on their teaching and on their students. This is consolidated in session six, which starts with a list of all the techniques learned so far and asks teachers to reflect on what successes they have had with them. Material is revisited again in week ten, when teachers give a final presentation reflecting on the course overall, the techniques they have learnt and their impact. The focus on successes in the gap tasks and final presentation demonstrates the programme culture of overcoming barriers to maths, fostering a positive, 'can-do' attitude to maths, which is an important element of overcoming barriers.

Motivate goals: The gap tasks encourage teachers to implement their learning by trying out the technique learned in the previous session. Session four starts with a small group discussion on what makes a successful lesson, motivating teachers to increase the effectiveness of their practice.

The programme is run by experienced FE maths teachers who, therefore, have an understanding and experience of the barriers to CPD that FE teachers might have and the challenges they and their students often face. This affords it a high degree of credibility with participants. Additionally, each session is explicitly underpinned by pedagogical theory and teachers are introduced to reliable sources of materials, such as The Standards Unit, which was originally established by the Department for Education and Skills in collaboration with teachers and researchers.

Praise and reinforcement are implicit and are likely to form an element of feedback during discussion of the regular gap tasks at the start of each session and following the final presentations in session ten. Teachers' reflections on the impact on their students of using each technique may also reinforce the technique if students have responded positively to it or if there has been evidence of learning or increased confidence during the lesson.

Teaching techniques: Teachers receive direct instruction in sessions and in the corresponding session workbook using worked examples of exam questions demonstrating a technique, with notations of how to explain it.

Collaborative group work throughout sessions promotes peer support and peer teaching. Examples of group work tasks include problem-solving, analysing a resource, or discussing a specific question, for example, 'What does a successful lesson look like?', followed by whole-group feedback. Teachers are also likely to get feedback on their practice from peers and tutors when reflecting on the gap tasks between sessions, enabling different perspectives and insights.

Techniques are modelled by tutors using a loop input (Woodward, 2003) approach, whereby teachers experience techniques, at the same time they learn about them. For example, in the session on bar modelling, teachers used bar modelling to answer past exam questions. Topics are personalised, making them more meaningful, for example, 'What does a diagnostic and responsive approach mean to you?', and starter questions: 'If you know that 3x4=12, what else do you know?'. This also models personalisation of lesson content for teachers to use with their own students.

The loop input approach means that techniques are rehearsed at the time of learning. Workbooks provide further opportunities for teachers to practise techniques they have learnt between sessions, as do the gap tasks, which include explicit instructions for teachers to follow, for example, 'use number line as a tool and reflect on its impact on your teaching and your students'. The use of past exam questions in sessions means that teachers will likely use these questions again in their own teaching, affording a further opportunity to rehearse each technique.

Embed practice: As well as the final presentation where teachers reflect overall on the techniques they have used and their impact, they also identify, which activities they are going to commit to incorporating into their practice and what the impact might be. This form of action planning also takes place during sessions with a task called 'Future practice' where teachers consider how they already teach a topic, how they might introduce a particular technique into their teaching of that topic and how this might benefit their students. For example, teachers are instructed to find and bookmark the Standards Unit on the STEM centre website and then explore and reflect on activities they find there. This is then followed up by the gap tasks and subsequent reflections that prompt teachers to monitor their practice in the light of each session and to set themselves a goal to use each technique. Linking techniques to exam questions in sessions and in the workbook supports teachers to repeatedly use them in their practice, which reinforces and consolidates their learning and increases the potential for changes to practice.

Self-learning is an integral component of the programme; teachers have two years' access to self-paced learning modules covering all the main foundation topics, with a focus on strengthening their subject knowledge. These self-paced learning modules can be accessed in their entirety or personalised to suit individual teachers' needs. These include progress checks to monitor learning.

Case study 6

External CPD provider

Context: The CPD for this case study is provided by the same external CPD provider featured in case study 4. The organisation provides an online platform that offers an extensive range of CPD programmes for the FE workforce, including courses for teachers of T Levels, apprenticeships, English and maths, as well as leadership development. It is one of the largest providers of CPD for the post-16 sector.

How CPD is organised

The CPD offer is commissioned and funded by the DfE and therefore, it is to be expected that it reflects policy priorities. The vast majority of their offer is unaccredited, apart from Professional Formation, leading to QTLS status, and the option to gain an ILM qualification through their leadership programmes for an additional fee. Their CPD offer is mostly online, although some programmes are also available as in-house sessions.

Analysis of CPD against the 14 mechanisms

The programme focuses on CPD for the apprenticeship workforce, particularly for assessors transitioning to teaching roles. This training is delivered online, in an asynchronous, on-demand format, providing flexibility for participants to engage with

the material at their own pace. The course consists of two equal parts, each lasting two hours, designed to support learning theories and instructional practice relevant to the apprenticeship sector. The programme is aimed at developing essential teaching skills while being accessible to a diverse range of teachers in the FE sector.

Instil insight: The programme incorporates strategies to support cognitive load management and sequence material effectively. Sessions include structured overviews and summaries to help participants organise their learning. Apprenticeship-specific examples are used to contrast traditional assessor roles with the new expectations placed on teaching staff, such as delivering planned sessions to groups rather than assessing individuals one-on-one. Participants reflect on how their role is shifting in response to apprenticeship reforms, including the introduction of endpoint assessment and the increased emphasis on delivering high-quality teaching, not just verifying competence. However, the training does not explicitly revisit previous material, assuming prior knowledge of fundamental concepts. Despite this, some self-directed revisiting is encouraged through additional resources and references. The approach ensures that participants engage with essential learning theories and principles in a structured and meaningful way.

Motivate goals: While there is no explicit goal-setting component within the programme, participants are encouraged to engage with relevant learning theories and apply them to their practice. One module encourages new teachers of apprenticeships to think about how they can explain technical concepts clearly, contextualise learning for workplace relevance, and adapt lessons to suit group delivery—a shift for many who are used to assessing rather than teaching. The training explicitly asks participants to consider how to support the development of occupationally relevant knowledge, skills, and behaviours, which are central to apprenticeship success. The content draws on credible sources, including government documents and academic citations, reinforcing the reliability of the information provided. General messages of encouragement and support are embedded throughout the programme, though direct reinforcement mechanisms such as targeted praise are not a key focus.

Teaching techniques: The course provides instruction on various learning theories, including behaviourism and cognitivism, to support teaching practice. Participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas via discussion forums, facilitating practical social support among peers. Teaching approaches are contextualised for apprenticeships, such as how flipped learning can be used to deliver theory online while reserving in-person sessions for application and problem-solving — especially useful in employer-facing roles. Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) is introduced to help teachers scaffold the complexity of tasks, from remembering procedures to applying knowledge in practical, real-world contexts. However, there is no structured feedback mechanism embedded in the programme. Some verbal examples of best practice are included, but detailed modelling of new techniques is limited. Reflection activities encourage participants to consider how they might implement new strategies in their teaching practice, but rehearsal opportunities for practising these techniques are not explicitly built into the programme structure.

Embed practice: The programme includes elements that prompt participants to consider how they will apply their learning, particularly through structured reflection and self-assessment activities. An action-planning component encourages individuals to identify implementation intentions for new strategies. Self-monitoring is facilitated through confidence rating exercises at the start and end of the course, allowing participants to track their progress. In Module 3, participants choose a context-specific task, such as planning a lesson for a group of apprentices or flipping a session to prepare learners for workshop-based delivery. They are also asked to identify key challenges in transitioning from assessing to teaching apprentices, such as building learner engagement and managing group dynamics, and to apply relevant theories, for example, constructivism for work-based project learning. Context-specific repetition is encouraged through workbook activities and follow-up tasks that reinforce key learning points, though ongoing embedded practice beyond the training is left to individual initiative.

Case study 7

SFC in Yorkshire

Context: This SFC is part of a large FE college located in a deprived area of Yorkshire. The college serves approximately 7,500 students, including around 1,000 with additional learning needs, nearly 250 of whom have high needs and hold an EHCP. The college offers a wide range of vocational, academic, and alternative SEND provision. With a strong focus on

supporting students into employment, the college collaborates with various partners to engage NEET students, enhancing educational opportunities and improving outcomes for all. As part of the broader college group, the provision includes a diverse range of academic and vocational courses, such as GCSEs in English and maths, A Levels, and extended project qualifications. The college was adjudged 'Outstanding' at their last Ofsted inspection.

How CPD is organised

The CPD programme consists of eight INSET days, along with subject-specific CPD sessions incorporated into weekly team meetings. INSET days are held in August, October, and February, with a full week dedicated to CPD in July, called 'Development Week', that culminates in a celebration event on the final day. Sessions are designed and delivered by a specific team with a remit to support staff development and CPD. For Development Week, there is a mixed and varied CPD programme for teaching and support staff. Sessions are standalone, and content is informed by evidence drawn from the college quality assurance processes, such as learning walks.

While most INSET days are college-wide, departments also have the flexibility to allocate time for subject-specific CPD. For instance, this year, the Childcare and Health department is using one INSET day as an 'industry day,' where teachers spend the day in hospitals or other industry-related settings. Although INSET days are conducted face-to-face, shorter CPD activities may be delivered online.

Analysis of CPD against the 14 mechanisms

The CPD presented in this case study focuses on questioning skills. The session took place during one of the single INSET days.

Instil insight: The CPD session is broken down into four areas, which inform the session outcomes and provide a single focus for each stage of the session, reducing cognitive load. Additionally, activities are designed to support teachers to contextualise content to their practice, showing relevance and applicability, for example, the warmer task includes a set of questions that guide teachers to reflect on the types of questions they use, and how and why they use them.

Motivate goals: There is no evidence of long-term goal setting in the session materials. However, there is a short-term goal setting whereby participants are asked to identify 'something you will do in a lesson tomorrow'. The session draws on a range of theories, including Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (Rosenshine, 2012), Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), Ebbinghaus' memory curve (2014 and materials from various teaching resource websites.

Teaching techniques: The session provides various strategies for effective questioning, with resources guiding teachers through individual questioning techniques. Teachers have the opportunity to rehearse these strategies by developing questions tailored to their specific teaching contexts. Social support is encouraged through pair work, as well as small and whole-group discussions, where colleagues explore different questioning approaches and reflect on their own practices. Teachers are invited to experiment with questioning techniques during group and pair activities, such as the 'Rewrite Your Partner's Question' exercise. Additionally, scenarios relevant to post-16 teaching are used to stimulate reflection, such as: 'You're midway through the qualification, and your students are familiar with your teaching style. How do you keep the lessons lively and engaging while incorporating Rosenshine's principles?' Questioning techniques are modelled using a loop input approach, such as modelling pose-pause-pounce when getting feedback on small group tasks.

Embed practice: Handouts provided to teachers offer prompts and cues for various questioning strategies, supporting them in planning their teaching. While there is no explicit focus on action planning during the session, self-monitoring is encouraged through the college's culture of CPD. This culture empowers staff as professionals responsible for their own development, which they document as part of the appraisal process. The session reinforces context-specific learning by having teachers reframe questions they've previously asked using a particular questioning technique and planning how they will integrate higher-order questioning into their practice.

Case study 8

SFC in North Yorkshire

Context: The organisation is a sixth form college that converted to a 16–19 academy in February 2019. It offers a diverse range of post-16 academic and vocational programmes, including T Levels, Access to Higher Education courses, and GCSE English and maths. The college serves approximately 2,300 students, including 12 with high needs—all of whom are enrolled on level 3 courses.

How CPD is organised

The college has implemented a structured CPD programme as part of its wider strategy to enhance teaching and learning. CPD includes whole-day sessions at the start and midpoint of the academic year, supplemented by 70-minute sessions in each half-term (October, January, March, May, and June). The programme is delivered face-to-face, with some additional materials shared via email. Weekly 'Tuesday Tips' emails also provide practical teaching and learning suggestions, supporting CPD engagement beyond formal sessions. The approach aims to engage teaching staff across disciplines by providing structured opportunities for development and reflection. Sessions are designed and delivered by the college's Teaching and Learning mentors, who also offer follow-up support and conduct drop-ins to see CPD topics in action.

Analysis of CPD against the 14 mechanisms

Instil insight: The sequencing and structure of the sessions are designed to break down concepts into manageable elements, allowing for more effective engagement and application of learning. The CPD programme is spread over multiple sessions throughout the year, providing repeated opportunities to engage with and build upon prior learning. The use of student feedback to inform focus areas adds a data driven layer to this insight-building approach.

Motivate goals: Each session includes general aims, such as exploring the impact of teaching techniques on student engagement and attainment. The programme draws on multiple sources, including academic research, government guidance, and examples of best practice, ensuring reliability and relevance. Staff choice in CPD strand promotes ownership of development goals. No explicit evidence of direct praise or reinforcement strategies was found within the materials provided.

Teaching techniques: The programme covers key pedagogical approaches such as engagement techniques, cold calling, and formative questioning to support effective teaching. CPD sessions take place in a group setting, providing opportunities for discussion, collaboration, and peer learning. Instructional videos created by internal mentors are also used to model techniques. No explicit mechanisms for structured feedback were identified in the provided materials. Some instructional videos, such as the 'Teach Like a Champion' materials, are incorporated to provide examples of best practice. No evidence of structured rehearsal or practice opportunities was found within the materials provided.

Embed practice: No explicit evidence of prompts or cues being used to support ongoing practice was found. Staff are encouraged to complete a lesson planning form that supports the application of learning into their teaching practice. No structured mechanisms for self-monitoring were identified in the provided materials. CPD resources remain available on the college's virtual learning environment for staff to revisit, supporting ongoing access and reflection. There is no explicit evidence of planned repetition or follow-up activities beyond the core CPD sessions.

Case study 9

Large MAT in the South of England

Context: The organisation is a large MAT with regional hubs in London, the South, and the Midlands. The MAT comprises 39 schools, approximately half of which are secondary schools. Thirteen of the secondary schools have sixth form provision with approximately 2,500 students aged 16–18 in total across the network. Roughly 40% of all students in the MAT are from disadvantaged backgrounds, as indicated by their eligibility for FSM. The 16–18 offer is made up of BTEC extended diploma programmes and A Levels in core subjects. The BTEC courses are in applied science, business, sport, and sport science

and are supported through a network programme called Professional Pathways. A Levels include maths, English literature, chemistry, biology, physics, history, computer science, economics, psychology, sociology

How CPD is organised

The wider CPD offer across the MAT includes national qualifications aligned to career progression and supports teachers at all stages of their career, from initial teacher training through to principal. In addition, there are three CPD days a year aligned to assessment points. They are designed to ensure that subject staff in all the schools across the MAT are teaching the same content in the same way at the same time.

Analysis of CPD

The focus of this case study is a session for A Level economics teachers as part of a network day. The objectives for the day are clearly stated, setting the same expectations for all teachers of all post-16 provision irrespective of their teaching subject. Teachers then divide into subject groups for CPD relating to their subject.

Instil insight: Teachers are given an overview of the Year 12 economics curriculum so that they can see what needs to be taught when providing a focus for the session and specified content. Unless the curriculum changes, teachers will be revisiting at least some of the material from previous network days.

Motivate goals: The aim of the network day is to ensure consistency within the Year 12 economics curriculum across all 16–18 provision in the MAT so that all teachers are teaching the same content in the same way at the same time and that the curriculum is aligned with assessment points. Session content, therefore, is explicitly grounded in the A Level economics syllabus and structured around different types of assessment for each stage of learning. Resources draw on exam questions and exemplar answers to serve as a springboard for discussion on appropriate teaching approaches.

Teaching techniques: Warmer questions provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their approach to assessment for learning. This promotes personalisation of session content and provides an opportunity for teachers to identify gaps in their knowledge. This is followed by direct instruction on using mini whiteboards as an assessment for learning tool. Instruction and modelling take the form of key resources, including PowerPoint presentations, that teachers are required to use in their teaching. Planning to use mini whiteboards for assessment for learning is implied through the requirement for teachers to identify how they could use mini whiteboards in their teaching over the next few weeks to check their students' understanding. Opportunities for peer support are provided through pair activities where, using past exam questions, teachers analyse the typical misconceptions students might have and use specific approaches to address them, such as drawing up an essay plan or chain of reasoning to answer the question. A standardisation activity provides an opportunity for rehearsal, and also for teachers to develop their assessment literacy.

Embed practice: Learning from the session is reinforced via a standardisation activity, which follows the same sequence of identifying typical mistakes or misconceptions students may make, analysing how to answer the question, marking the sample response and comparing grades and feedback. This also provides an opportunity for context-specific repetition.

Appendix 4: Search terms

The search terms used to identify CPD programmes for Stage 1 of Output 2 were: *action planning, peer support, managing cognitive load, FE, FES, post-16, teacher learning, professional learning, professional development, in-service training, continuing professional development, vocational, technical, pedagogy, teachers, practitioners, teacher workshops, continuing education, teacher collaboration, teacher competencies, mental health and well-being, inclusion, assessment, community of practice.*

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