

# UK Colleges Transform Leadership in OD Project

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## The Challenge

How do you take a further education college that is an average performer and mobilise the impetus, capacity and the desire to transform itself into a centre of excellence? This is the challenge that Lynne Sedgmore, Chief Executive of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) gave to Bath Consultancy Group.

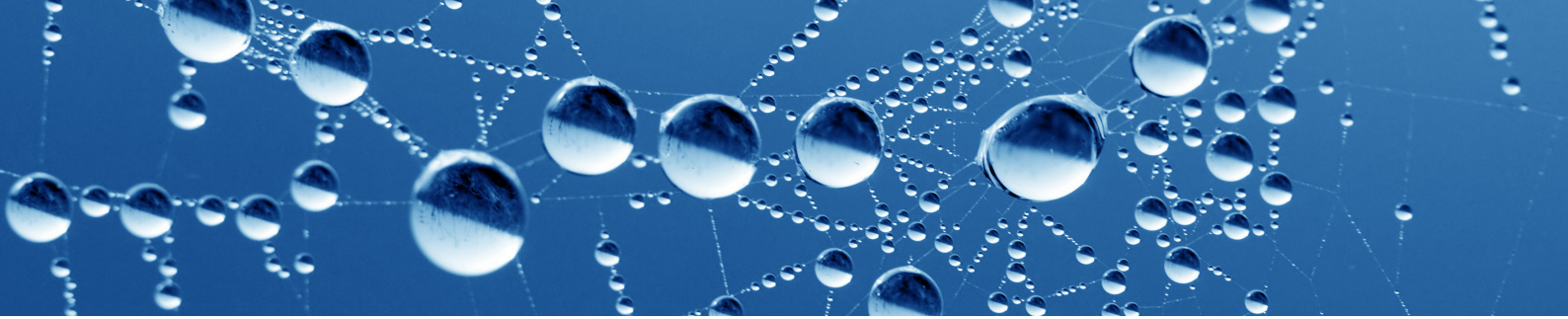
Bath Consultancy Group was selected to initially work with three colleges who were identified by and where the senior management team of each college were keen to participate.

## The Programme

The programme focussed on developing the leadership within the college and importantly helping to shift their own capacity to improve. As Sue Rimmer, Principal of SW Thames College of Further Education, says: *"The question is: how can we as leaders move from a position where we're talking about problems and what other people should do, to talking about solutions and what our individual actions are in those solutions - what should we do?"*

Bath Consultancy Group has been working with two middle performing colleges. The key objectives were:

- Accelerate the progression from satisfactory to good and then onto excellent, in particular shifting the college's own capacity for improvement
- Raise achievement levels that feed economic prosperity
- Achieve better Ofsted ratings
- Create a greater educative capacity amongst the staff leading to an enhanced experience for learners
- Develop better local partnerships on skills and economic improvement



## And the Results...

### Glowing OFSTED report for Gloucestershire College

September 2008 - The latest OFSTED inspection of Gloucestershire College has praised the strong leadership of the principal and senior managers recognising their aim of becoming an outstanding college over the next four years.

‘The college is accurate in its assessment that leadership and management are good across the college. Strong leadership from the principal and senior managers has brought about much improvement since the last inspection. Senior managers and governors have set a very clear strategic direction, which is well understood and shared by staff. Managers have set challenging targets to achieve the aim of becoming an outstanding college over the next four years.’ OFSTED 2008

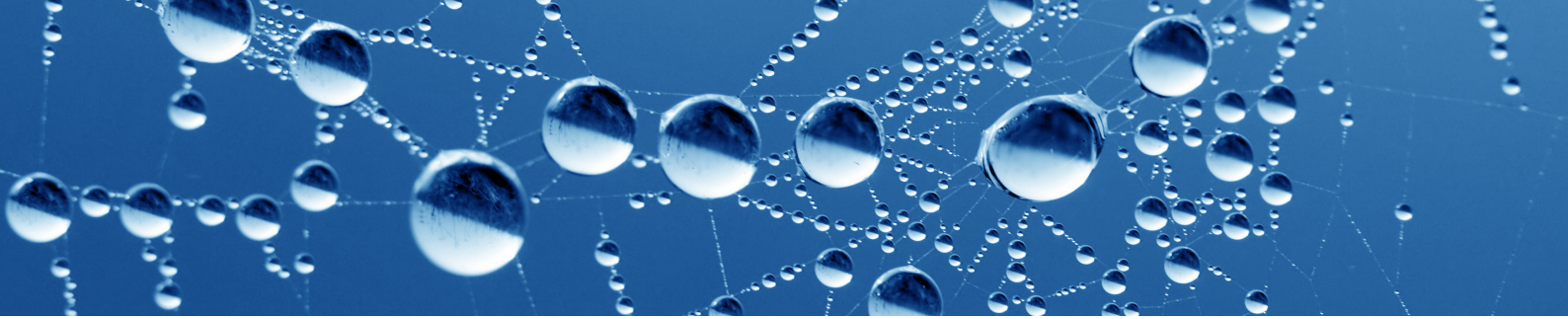
The college, which had previously been deemed satisfactory, is part of a pilot project initiated by Lynne Sedgemore, former Chief Executive of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership. For the past six months, Bath Consultancy Group has been working with Gloucestershire College to accelerate the change from a satisfactory college towards an outstanding establishment.

*“Bath Consultancy provided an excellent opportunity for us to consider our approach to leadership throughout the College. With their help we have embarked on a journey to transform our College culture.”* says Greg Smith, Principal of Gloucestershire College.

The Bath Consultancy Group team, led by John Watters under the overall direction of Danny Chesterman, provided just 30 consultancy days support to the college, helping us to align our leadership and organisational culture. The college used the Organisation Workshop as a catalyst for developing leadership potential at middle and senior levels in the college.

Total Improvement Process Ltd, using both quantifiable and qualitative criteria for assessing change, independently evaluated Bath Consultancy Group’s contribution to Gloucestershire College’s Journey to Excellence. Some of the significant shifts that had taken place were:

- Moving beyond functional silo based working to collective cross functional and cross level working
- Moving away from a top driven organisation to more distributed leadership in which people hold an awareness of, and need to work with, different perspectives
- Growing the habit of ‘saying your truth’, including owning up to vulnerability, whilst also reducing the tendency to blame others, both within and beyond the leadership team
- Releasing potential and experimentation at different levels to build a contagious appetite for improvement



- Making learning not just classroom based but an integral part of leading effectively in the moment
- Switching from habitually problem focused conversations to more solution focused ones in which appreciation and asking questions is a key feature

Danny Chesterman of Bath Consultancy Group said, *“We are delighted that the OFSTED inspection has validated the shifts we have seen happening on the ground... it’s a tribute to the willingness of managers at all levels to speak their truth, hear the feedback from others and take responsibility for positive change.”*

Bath Consultancy Group has just completed work with a second FE college and will be starting a third college shortly.

## **Northampton College transforms leadership in organisation development project with Bath Consultancy Group**

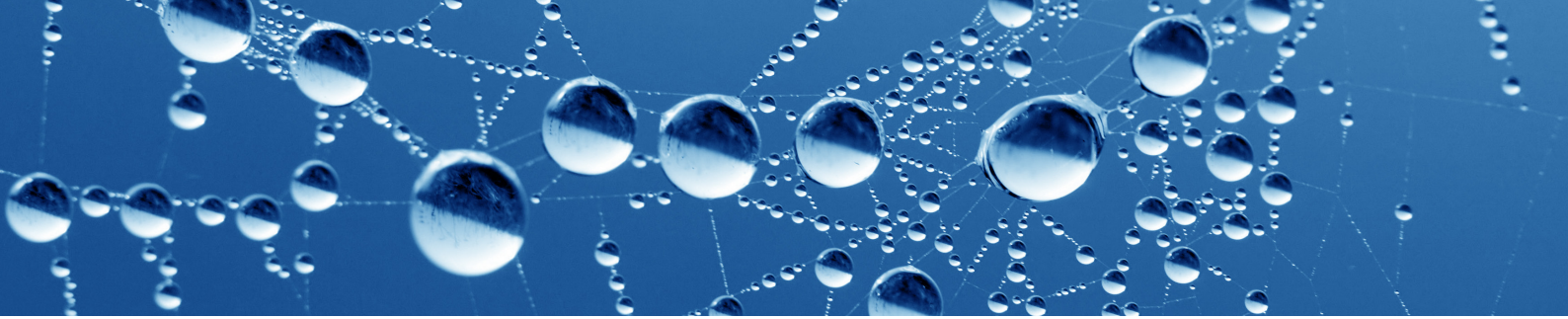
### **Leadership seen to improve by 47% in just seven months**

September 2008 - On a journey to lift its performance rating from ‘satisfactory’ to ‘excellent’, Northampton College has made a major leadership shift following an organisational development project with Bath Consultancy Group that began in 2007.

An independent evaluation of the success of this project by Total Improvement Process Ltd found that leadership across the College is now more focused on creating positive change and increasingly unified in how it makes the change happen. The manager perception scores for leadership improvement leapt by 47% in just seven months.

Northampton College is making strides towards higher Ofsted scores with an overwhelming majority (93%) of managers confident in its ability to achieve noticeable improvements for learners over the next three years. The same proportion believes that staff are signed up to making real progress.

Margaret Bishop, UK Associate at Bath Consultancy Group said: *“The relationship we developed with the leadership team was both challenging and supportive, modelling how they increasingly wanted to relate to others. We created opportunities for them to engage with the real experiences of staff and students, challenging taken-for-granted ways of behaving and organising. This relationship proved a positive element of the project.”*



As well as leadership progress, a key area of change has been an improvement in the confidence of managers. This has come about as a result of greater inclusion of Programme Managers in the running of the College and in decisions on procedures and curriculum initiatives, higher levels of communication and collaborative working, more assertive decision making, and greater alignment with the College's goals and vision.

Danny Chesterman, Principal Consultant at Bath Consultancy Group led the programme with Margaret Bishop. He said: *"Our challenge was to give Northampton College the impetus, capacity and desire to shift from being an average performer and transform itself into a centre of excellence. The programme looked at how the leadership team assessed itself and was seen by the organisation, where the pockets of excellence and passion existed and connecting them across the College. Using workshops, coaching and action groups, Bath Consultancy Group has provided the College with a catalyst to think and act differently."*

According to the Total Improvement Process Ltd, 'the evidence strongly suggests that Bath Consultancy had helped the College make a major leadership shift that has released the energy to improve'.

Northampton College Principal Len Closs said: *"With support coming from the Centre for Excellence in Leadership, the project we undertook with Bath Consultancy Group is of central importance to our efforts to support and develop managers in their roles. These early indications illustrate a positive change, with managers more confident in their abilities and focused on the College's exciting goals and vision. There are still many challenges ahead, so we must learn from the Bath experience and continue our drive to improve leadership and management across all areas. I am in no doubt this project will help Northampton College gain its rightful place as the excellent college it deserves to be."*