

Consultancy work in Initial Teacher Training: A new venture for CCDU

After joining CCDU in September 2003 Gill Tricoglus began working with two LEAs, Stockton and Doncaster, who last year gained Designated Recommending Body status from the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). Here are some of Gill's responses when questioned about this work in a recent interview:

What exactly is a Designated Recommending Body?

"A Designated Recommending Body (DRB) plays a key part in the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). The DRB is given an allocation of initial teacher training places from the TTA and then has responsibility for recruiting suitable trainees and placing them in schools that agree to undertake their training.

An Ofsted report on the Graduate Teacher Programme in 2002 was quite critical of certain aspects, and this led to the establishment of DRBs as a means of improving the consistency of provision and the quality of training offered to graduates embarking on an employment based training route into teaching. The major purpose of the DRB then is to develop and assure quality provision for GTP trainees.

The GTP is an employment based route into teaching in which a trainee is employed by a school as an unqualified teacher and the school undertakes to carry out their teacher training over a given period of time. It is a really good way of entering the teaching profession for graduates who already have experience of schools or relevant experience from prior employment as it is a more individualised form of training than conventional routes into teaching. The success of the programme does however depend a great deal on the individual trainee's ability to be a 'self directed', independent and confident learner.

There are now 107 Designated Recommending Bodies. Some of these are existing Initial Teacher Training Providers, for example Higher Education Institutions, but a number of Local Education Authorities also recognised that involvement in this initiative could have great benefits in relation to the recruitment of new teachers. Stockton and Doncaster are two such LEAs who in June 2003 were awarded Designated Recommending Body status by the TTA."

What made the two LEAs come to you?

"It was really all a bit of a rush for both Stockton and Doncaster who at this time last year found out they had been successful in their bid to the TTA for DRB status. Within the space of a few months they had to recruit trainees, find schools who were interested in participating and put in place the structures and systems necessary for the implementation of a training programme!

Stockton contacted Northumbria University and because of my involvement in setting up their DRB the year before I was asked by the University if I would be able to support Stockton as they established their programme.

Doncaster was a bit more accidental. An NPQH colleague, a Headteacher in Doncaster, just happened to know my background in Initial Teacher Training and so when their newly formed steering group began to realise the enormity of the task they were facing, she suggested I might be able to help."

Tell me a bit about your work in Stockton

"The work I have been doing with Stockton has four aspects:

- General consultancy and advice
- Developing systems, processes and documentation
- Supporting school based tutors and coordinators
- Continuous Quality Improvement procedures

The general consultancy involves being a member of the DRB Steering Group. In this capacity I am able to contribute to the development of the programme and help the Steering Group make appropriate decisions about all aspects of the programme, including selection and recruitment.

I have helped the DRB develop their programme handbook and the procedures needed to plan training, assess trainee progress and document evidence of meeting the standards for QTS.

The training and preparation for school based tutors and training coordinators was one of my first tasks with the DRB and this is still something in which I have a substantial involvement. It is so vital for the quality of the trainee's experience that their colleagues in school thoroughly understand their roles and feel supported in carrying this out.

We have worked really hard to develop CQI procedures in this first year. I have worked with the Steering Group to monitor the trainees' progress through the scrutiny of files and other training documentation and helped to establish procedures for quality assuring the school based support of trainees. Perhaps most significantly I have helped the Steering Group make appropriate judgements about the recommendation of each trainee for the award of Qualified Teacher Status."

Is the project in Doncaster similar?

"Very similar, although I haven't been quite as involved in a general consultancy role. However, what has been really beneficial to everyone has been the cross-fertilisation of ideas between the two providers (or three counting Northumbria). Because I am involved across the three programmes it has been possible to share ideas and develop practice for all three parties. For example in Doncaster I was involved in a programme review meeting with school based tutors and coordinators; I was able to feed the improvements suggested by this group into later discussions with the Stockton group and this will have an impact on plans for both DRBs in the coming training year."

Says Keith Robinson, Recruitment Strategy Manager, Doncaster LEA:

"Gill has been a major player in developing this scheme in Doncaster over the past year. She has brought a degree of professionalism and experience to the programme that we were previously lacking. We would have got there ourselves, but without her our journey would have been considerably more difficult. I particularly agree with her about the benefit of 'cross-fertilisation' between the three schemes in which she has been involved."

What are the next steps?

"The experience in both Stockton and Doncaster last year represented a very steep learning curve for us all. Many changes have been made in response to what has been learnt, and we are eager to see if the changes made will have a positive impact on the quality of experience for the trainees.

The response from schools has been phenomenal; a number of schools want to participate in the programme for a second year, and many more have expressed interest in joining the DRB partnership in the future. This is quite a commitment for schools and in particular for the individual teachers who take on responsibility for trainees during their training. It is quite different to mentoring trainees from conventional ITT programmes, but school based tutors overwhelmingly report how worthwhile and valuable it is to be involved in the Graduate Teacher Programme and how much this contributes to their own professional development.

Ofsted Inspection of the Designated Recommending Bodies will take place in the next academic year and the TTA are also consulting ITT providers about how it might be possible for DRBs to become accredited as initial teacher training providers, so I suspect I will be busy in Stockton and Doncaster for some time to come!"

If you would like to find out more please contact Gill on 0113 283 6138 or email gill@ccdu.co.uk