

Example: Module 1 Reflection

Guiding Questions:

- What CPD did you complete?
- What ended up being the main focus of your CPD?
- What were the most helpful aspects of the Accreditation process?
- What barriers did you encounter and how did you overcome these?
- What role did the coaching sessions play in your CPD journey?
- How did this CPD develop you personally or professionally?
- What key learning will you take back to your educational setting?

This maternity leave I have continued to enjoy developing my subject knowledge, especially in relation to classic fiction, literacy and KS5 English Literature. As an English teacher, I have completed the following CPD activities:

- Trips to national museums, National Trust places and sites of literary interest
- ChwaraeTeg's Women in Leadership programme
- Observation of PGCE lessons (FE/Drama Groups/Football Training/Beauty Therapy) and primary school visits
- Book Club and library visits - learning Welsh as part of Clwb Cwtsh (with baby)
- contextual and close reading, and performance analysis of Jane Eyre and Harman's Fiery Heart
- FutureLearn course on the Fame of Jane Austen and Leadership in EdTech
- Mentoring of Chartered Teacher programme participants - English teachers

The main focus of this maternity leave, however, has been on moving towards the next steps in my career and clarifying what I really want from teaching.

I currently work as a Lecturer in FE and HE with responsibility for vocational teachers and professional trainers, and have experience outside of school developing early career teachers and ITT through coaching and facilitating secondary PGCE teachers across a variety of subjects. My dream job in the medium term is to be the Teaching and Learning Mentor for the Sixth Form centre of where I work, including ITT paths. Before taking my second maternity leave I was in essence demoted due to the closure of the 25 year old IB Programme of which I co-coordinated and had done for the last 3 years. I was tasked with teaching a number of new subjects, simply to fill my timetable and my specialist subject was sidelined. I found myself becoming frustrated by the lack of opportunities for me to continue any sort of career progression as on paper it looked very much like a demotion and I felt that I was stagnating especially as I no longer taught my subject of Literature and after only 1 year of my teaching another long term A Level subject, that too was due to be scrapped due to falling numbers and cost cutting. Another area of concern was if a resolution wasn't reached in the next academic year for me to focus on my specialism, it would also negatively impact any hopes of applying for jobs elsewhere as an English teacher. Thankfully, I managed to get pregnant,

legitimising my career trajectory and allowing me time and space to review my future career and its progression. Unfortunately pregnancy and the state of play at work as well as challenges in my home life had made me anxious and my confidence levels were low. I wanted to see if I was actually able to secure the job I felt was somehow being withheld from me or if I could actually gain different employment.

As part of my maternity CPD, I applied for two jobs: one was for the role of Teacher of English in a local private boarding school - in a new school. Whilst this may not have seemed an appropriate progression in terms of additional responsibility, it was, after 6 years of being out of the secondary sector, quite the challenge. I wasn't sure I could even teach KS3 and the school ethos is underpinned by being a technology college showcasing Microsoft (whereas I had been working in a college which was primarily Google Suite). Furthermore, with two children, I wasn't entirely sure I could commit to the lengthy days and weekend activity programme and so, although it was advertised as a full time post, I applied for a part time position. Unfortunately, the job role advertised came with no job nor person specification and as such the application process was rather more challenging than I initially expected. I had no way of knowing how to match my skills and experiences specifically to the job specification (as there was none) nor how to evidence the impact of my actions and previous leadership. It was however a great opportunity to update my CV and reflect on the CPD I had completed since the beginning of my first maternity leave and when I had left the secondary private boarding sector. This review and consideration allowed me to use as evidence on my application form and for interview - although technically it was 6 years out of date.

The second role I applied for was in-house and once again there was no outline of responsibilities nor person requirements, merely an email expression of interest. Having managed to secure part time for my future return to work, I wasn't entirely sure how well this second role would work in a part time capacity. Having completed an ILM course through a Women in Leadership programme as part of my maternity CPD and having attained Chartered Teacher status just prior to my maternity leave, the Teaching and Learning Mentor had been a role I had hoped to acquire. It had for a number of years lapsed as an existing role however I had heard during my KIT days there was some talk of its revival. A colleague encouraged me to consider it and with that little support and belief in my capabilities, when the role was duly 'advertised', I sent the expression of interest email.

For both of these I had not discussed my applying for them with any of my work colleagues or even close friends due to an event days prior to my starting maternity leave which had shattered my confidence and destroyed any friendly connections with my colleagues. In all honesty, I desperately wanted the first job to escape from having to return to work and the department. Sleep deprivation, concerns about juggling childcare and ongoing family problems were real barriers to my feeling wholly confident I could adequately undertake a role as a classroom teacher in a secondary school, no less a boarding school. However, the thought I may have to continue to work with colleagues who had so cruelly mocked my CPD endeavours and action research project behind my back (but unfortunately very much within my earshot unbeknownst to them) days before my maternity leave were a great motivator.

Just prior to my first application I had signed up to undertake the MTPT Accreditation and was assigned a coach. She gave much needed space for reflection and discussion and provided me with some very challenging options I needed to really consider.

I was successful in securing both interviews. The first was incredibly bizarre - I was pitted against two men; one of whom was an Educational Consultant, the other a Deputy Headteacher. I was an FE Lecturer who had 6 years earlier worked in a boarding school. I found the interview process hugely developmental. It helped me to better clarify my non-negotiables (part time teaching to enable a better work - life balance and autonomy over my text choices throughout all key stages) and the realisation that my session planning was overly ambitious when teaching a KS3 middle ability class. Frustratingly, no feedback was given and a week after the interviews the school closed for the summer and there was a 'huge' management reshuffle. Nobody was appointed to the Teacher of English role either before nor after the summer break (due to low student numbers) and the only 'feedback' of a sort was that should numbers improve enough to warrant another member of the English team, my details would be kept on file and I wouldn't need to go through the interview process again. I took this to be complementary and that I had been successful in interview but I do not know if the other two candidates were also told this?

The second in-house interview was 'a chat'. Another colleague had applied and in his interview had told them to appoint me as I was far better suited to the role. And I was duly appointed before even setting foot in the interview room. Whilst this was great news in achieving a much coveted role, whether or not I was a success at interview was very much undermined by my competition ruling himself out. The chat was not an interview and asking for feedback was null and void due to this.

Thankfully, both my MTPT coaching sessions and an unexpected approach to become a paid Coach Supervisor for the Accelerate Programme as well as my own mentoring of current CTeach participants and their feedback has boosted my professional confidence. The issue is no longer whether I am sufficiently experienced for these roles- I know that I am thanks in part to applying for a new job and reviewing my CV - but whether this is what I want at this stage of my career. These coaching sessions, interviews and conversations have made me question the root of my sense of frustration. The core of my job is teaching English, teaching others how to teach and supporting colleagues to become better teachers, three things that I passionately love doing. What is great is I now have a title that gives me authority and clear influence. However the remuneration does not adequately reflect all that I do and am capable of. A great deal of my job is about achieving impact through others and receiving little recognition for this beyond my personal interactions with colleagues and student teachers. This should be enough, but it's not - not only in terms of professional status and progression, but also in terms of earning potential. I have this year managed to gain a place on the PMAR (Performance Management and Review) which is an opportunity to create a folder showcasing all that I do in order to progress to the Upper Pay Scale. The process is onerous and most frustratingly having had in essence an academic year off, my evidence is not consistent, something which is a key aspect of the file. It is possible that due to maternity leave I have been detrimentally affected although I have included Impact Statements to show I have not been inactive in my CPD.

This questioning around my current role has also been influenced by the increasing demands of family life: as this is my second maternity leave, my time has been more limited and greater demands are placed upon the time I do have available. In my previous maternity leave period and return to work I was very lucky to have fantastic support from my mother in law. Unfortunately my brother-in-law was diagnosed with Leukemia two weeks after I had given birth to my second child. This has really shown me the importance of being present and compartmentalising roles. I no longer attend all voluntary Councillor meetings due to childcare or lack thereof. I have requested and been granted part time work to allow greater flexibility in such things as being able to take my daughter to her after school activities once a week and have a morning with my son at a Toddler group. I have made conscious choices to identify that specific time slots in the day and week are dedicated family time, where it is not possible to plan, mark or answer emails. This will help me to work efficiently and model good wellbeing practices for my trainees as well as allow me to achieve the work-life balance that many parents never achieve in teaching.

What has become apparent through this maternity CPD and especially the MTPT coaching conversations is that I am in great danger of losing the sense of who I am and what I want beyond work and being a mother. Although I do worry that I have been out of secondary teaching too long, to disrupt this by taking on a new challenge at a new school at this stage would be damaging to both my wellbeing and the wellbeing of my family. I want to be fulfilled by being good at what I do and having a balanced life without needing the great career progression and accompanying titles and thus responsibility. At the same time however, I recognise that who I am is very much caught up in being an English teacher and has been from early childhood. As such, whilst I do want to feel as if I am moving forwards in my career and using the skills and knowledge from undertaking the Chartered Teacher Programme prior to my maternity leave and other CPD during my maternity leave to make a more significant impact on student outcomes, and support my colleagues to provide the quality that is required to enable all of our students to achieve. I also realise that these things can only be achieved with the sense of achievement needed as a form of validation, if I am also able to adequately address my own wellbeing.

These are the three key things that I am taking back to my workplace with me:

1. Having secured not only part time hours, but also now being assigned only subjects that are within my specialism, workload is now manageable. I want to foster this so that I can spend meaningful time with my family, and for myself, so that I can sustain my career as a teacher as well as discovering who I am.
2. There are ways in which I can use the knowledge gained during the many different CPD opportunities during my maternity leave as well as the MTPT Coaching to create the Teaching and Learning Mentor role in my own style that gives me the recognition I need to feel fulfilled and that will help to make me more competitive for future T&L roles. Specifically, I would like to explore the possibility of being more involved in Coaching and Mentoring.
3. I do not need whole school responsibility or to return to the secondary sector to be fulfilled in my career progression as I know that I have impact in other areas

(Accelerate, the Chartered Teacher Programme) and this will become my focus, whilst continuing with the job I know that I can do well and that I enjoy, and allowing me to begin to read for enjoyment rather than just for purposes of lesson delivery and content.