

Client need

Our client is responsible for delivery of grant funding for children's centres and for ensuring that the centres apply sound financial management over their resources. Longer term, there is uncertainty over the extent of future grant support for these centres so it is essential to their sustained viability that they have a strong business model and financial procedures and controls in place.

To help our client and the children's centres achieve their aims our client committed to put in place support mechanisms, including training, for the management teams of the children's centres.

maltway approach

We worked closely with our client's grant monitoring team to identify training needs and develop a one-day programme for children's centre management and finance support staff that would help:

- Develop their core financial knowledge and skills
- Strengthen communication within the team, particularly between business managers and finance assistants
- Identify key financial risks and consequent controls to put in place
- Begin to develop or confirm that they have adequate internal financial reporting in place
- Prepare monitoring returns to a consistent standard and on a timely basis
- Develop contacts and relationships between themselves and our client's grant monitoring team.

To get "buy in" the course needed to be highly engaging and participatory. It draws extensively on participants' experiences and challenges them to identify risks and the financial controls to put in place. Participants come as a team with their finance administrator. Grant monitoring staff are present throughout the day to answer detailed questions and build relationships.

Outcomes

Over an intensive week-long period, we delivered the programme to a core of 15 centres in the borough working with around 60 staff. The next phase of this work will be an adaptation to take to the private, voluntary and independent sector. Feedback from participants has been excellent and our client is already benefitting from improved and timelier communication.

Additional information

As local government increasingly moves to a model of working in partnership to deliver services, it is critical that this model does not blur accountability and lead to loss of control over resources. Programmes in financial control and management, in the local context, need to form a core part of any such initiative.