

# Rapid Evidence Assessment: Remote Professional Development

This rapid evidence assessment examines the existing research (from 17 systematic reviews and meta-analyses) for approaches that schools could use, or are already using, to support staff professional development remotely.

## Key findings and implications

### **1. Professional development can be supported effectively remotely**

School professionals can gain knowledge and skills through remote PD, ultimately leading to gains in pupil outcomes. Evidence is mixed as to whether remotely-delivered PD is more or less effective than face-to-face PD, but specific benefits include lower costs and time incurred through travel. Other design principles are likely to be more important to PD outcomes than whether delivery is face-to-face or remote. There is not strong evidence that school-based PD should be delayed until it can be delivered face-to-face.

Blending synchronous and asynchronous delivery, and blending face-to-face and remote learning, may offer specific benefits by enabling trainees to feel part of a community while retaining savings, flexibility and social distance during remote and asynchronous elements.

### **2. Remote coaching, mentoring and expert support can be effective alone or as part of broader PD programmes**

Coaching and mentoring can improve skills and knowledge of professionals when delivered remotely and may reduce feelings of isolation in professionals.

Remote or blended coaching, mentoring and expert support can be used to complement broader remote or blended PD programmes.

### **3. The use of video can enhance remote PD**

Across a number of reviews the use of video is identified as a particularly effective element of PD that enables teaching staff to review their own and reflect on others' actions in the classroom. The targeted use of videos generally increases the time trainees take to complete PD but leads to gains in practitioner knowledge and pupil outcomes.

Video viewing is unlikely to be impactful in isolation and should instead be paired with other learning resources such as viewing guides or discussion with other professionals. One contradictory finding (though not limited to remote PD) suggests caution and monitoring is necessary when using video resources to support coaching conversations.

### **4. Interactive content and opportunities for collaboration hold promise for remote professional development**

More interactive content tends to increase the time practitioners take to complete PD and is associated with better completion rates, knowledge and skill acquisition. Spaced education approaches (such as regular email surveys) could be particularly promising and may offer a low-cost way of enabling ongoing interaction with PD content. Conversely, barriers such as information being difficult to access can have a detrimental effect on user engagement.

Collaboration between colleagues may also improve PD outcomes through enabling reflective practice and collective problem-solving. For example, PD providers may include peer small-group discussion sessions following completion of individual tasks.

### **5. Remote professional development requires supportive school conditions (support from leaders, protected time, tech-specific training, platform ease of access)**

School leaders have a critical role to play in ensuring enabling conditions are provided for remote coaching and mentoring relationships to be successful. They can support staff to prioritise their PD by creating protected time within the working day for staff to engage with PD sessions or materials.

Schools should ensure staff have access to technology required for their PD and appropriate training in order to access this safely, efficiently and appropriately. PD outcomes are strengthened where clarifying the purpose of the PD, roles and expectations are clear; this may require co-ordination from the PD provider, trainee, and school leadership team.

#### **Limitations**

The evidence in this review is drawn from diverse contexts that do not closely parallel the circumstances facing schools responding to Covid-19 in 2020.

In all cases, it is important for school leaders, PD providers and school professionals to use their professional judgement in designing and selecting PD and to monitor its impact on learning.

