

Raising the Game: Developing Leadership within the Cultural Sector

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During the first two weeks of July 2006 I attended the inaugural Clore Leadership Programme Short Course - part of a scheme to raise management and leadership skills in the cultural sector. As part of its strategic vision for the future, the University of Manchester is encouraging the development of management and leadership skills amongst its staff. The first course was held at the prestigious Ashridge Business School in Hertfordshire. Ashridge provides extensive facilities for both teaching and self-development, including its well-regarded Learning Resource Centre.

The intensive two-week residential course drew on the expertise of resident Ashridge tutors and leading figures from the business sector and cultural world. The courses are lead by Chris Smith, formerly Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and now Director of the Clore Leadership Programme. Areas covered included sessions on governance, charity and company law, human resources and labour relations, finance and accounting, IT developments, strategic planning, managing capital developments, lobbying, media and presentation skills and fundraising.

The design of the course allowed flexibility so that particular areas could be adapted to meet the needs of individual participants. The consistent theme of the course was the development of leadership skills, including influencing, managing teams, and personal development. Throughout the course, all of us were encouraged to extend ourselves, often into unknown and even uncomfortable areas. Case studies and issues raised by both those attending and facilitating were explored in depth during timetabled sessions and discussions frequently continued into breaks and mealtimes. The outcome was an atmosphere of positive challenge, mutual support and articulate debate. Participants were drawn from a wide range of creative and cultural backgrounds. More than anything else the Clore Short Course provided a means for the exchange of ideas and knowledge in an environment that increased personal growth and developed new contacts.

I am aware of being able to provide improved management and leadership skills particularly in the areas of day-to-day operational management of technical activities, project management and line management of staff. A new Gallery structure provides an arena for my participating to a greater degree in policy and planning initiatives and sharing skills and learning outcomes from the Clore course. The implementation of the Gallery's new strategic vision enables a more defined focus for teams and individual staff.