Building Schools for the Future

The client design advisor

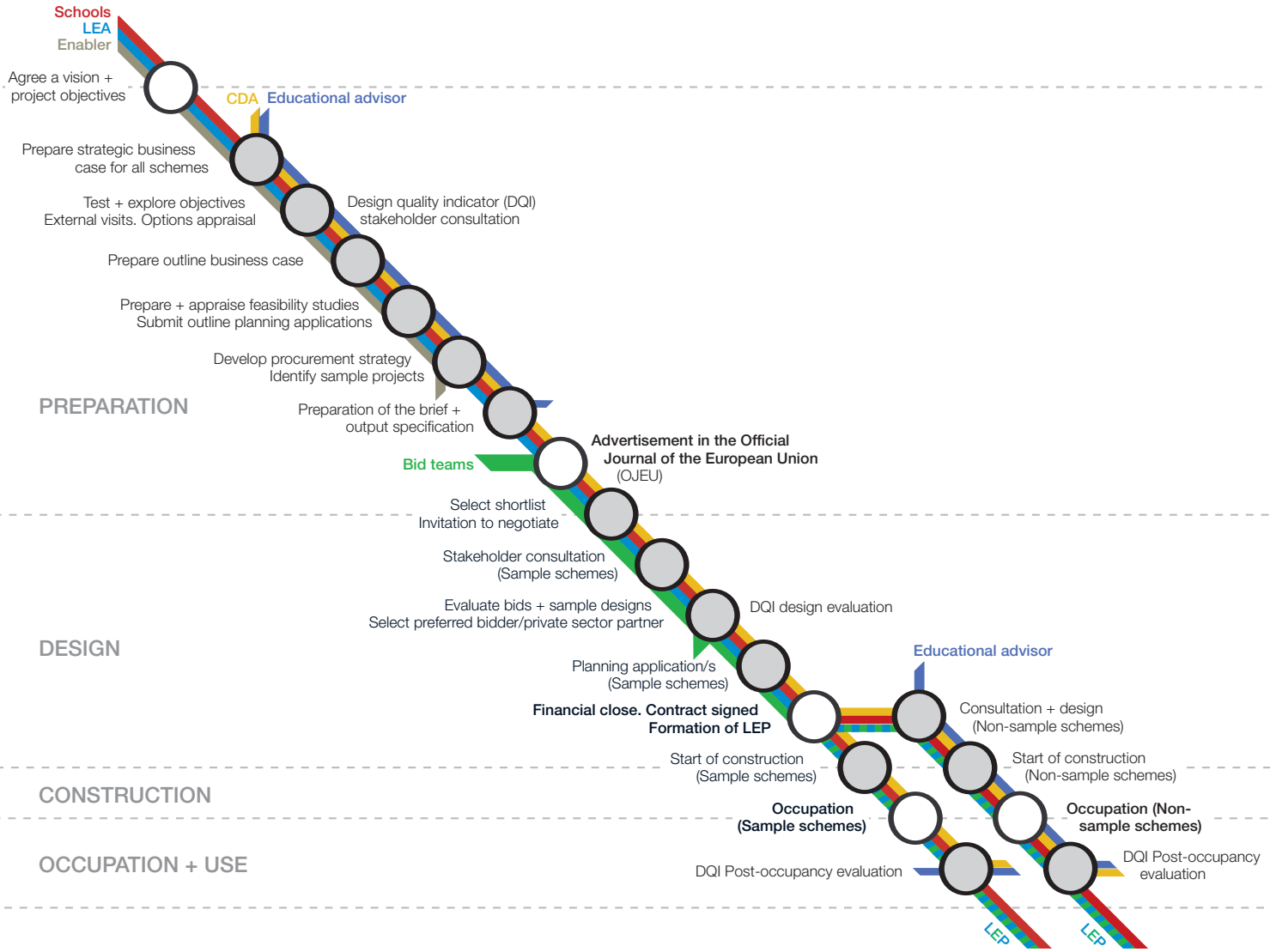
cabe

Project stages

The client design advisor acts from the inception of a BSF project through to its completion, performing a range of tasks to help ensure that the schools delivered are of the highest quality.

The graphic below represents the involvement of each party according to milestones within the project stages.

Note: All Partnerships for Schools projects in waves 2 and 3 will have access to a CABE appointed enabler. CABE enablers offer advice and initiate activities in the early stages, then as the project progresses their involvement is superseded by the CDA's responsibilities.



Designing schools for the future

A well-designed school works for all of its users. The design of learning environments can have a significant impact on the attainment and behaviour of the pupils attending a school, staff can feel more valued and motivated and people who live locally are more likely to use the facilities that are available to them. The design of the building and the open space around it can have a positive impact on its surroundings and encourage people to be proud to be associated with the school and the neighbourhood.

Over the next 15 years, the Building Schools for the Future programme will rebuild or refurbish every secondary school in England. Local education authorities (LEAs) will form joint ventures with private sector partners (PSPs), and the central government delivery vehicle, Partnerships for Schools (PfS), to form local education partnerships (LEPs). Each LEP will be in charge of providing the design and construction work, as well as maintaining buildings and grounds for the LEA.

To get the best out of the programme, those responsible for delivering and maintaining these educational environments need to ensure the highest design standards are achieved throughout the lifetime of a project, from inception and partnering right through to occupation.

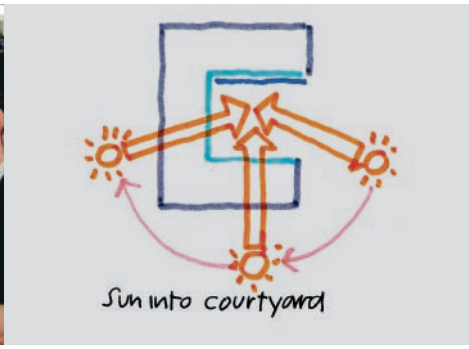
What is a client design advisor?

A client design advisor (CDA) is a skilled, experienced architect who can advise the LEA on all aspects of design for each school and can help to achieve high-quality buildings and environments. Involving an effective CDA early on should make real differences to the quality of projects and save time and money in the long-term.

In line with the recommendations of CABE, the use of CDAs will be required by Partnerships for Schools (PfS) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on all Building Schools for the Future projects from wave 2 onwards in order to ensure high-quality outcomes from current investments in schools' premises and facilities. These include:

- improved educational results
- a wider role for schools in the communities they serve
- environmental and social sustainability
- better value for money.

Although CDAs are appointed as experienced individuals, they will be expected to have a wider team to assist them in providing a range of expert advice and expertise to the LEA and schools. The CDA will work alongside other advisors (such as educational, legal and technical advisors) and together with the LEA's design champion will promote best value outcomes for the LEA.



Job description

The process of forming a LEP will include a competitive procedure to select a private sector partner (PSP). As part of this procedure the PSP's design teams will develop designs for a small number of sample schools. To prepare for and to facilitate this, the CDA's responsibilities, working together with the BSF project leader and an education expert, should include:

Preparation stage

Consultation and facilitation

- promoting awareness of design quality among stakeholders and the client team
- arranging visits to and providing information on other school projects in the UK and abroad
- involving the schools and other stakeholders in the project and helping to identify key design issues and aspirations
- using design quality indicators (DQIs) as a tool in the consultation process.

Exploring options and feasibility

- option appraisals and initial design work, including viability, feasibility and urban design studies
- analysing schools' proposed curricula against schedules of areas, together with schools, the education advisor and project managers
- checking together with others in the team that costs in strategic and outline business cases are realistic and that cost estimates continue to be monitored.

Brief development

- preparing thorough briefs together with the project leader and education advisor in consultation with the end users
- establishing a consistent emphasis on achieving design excellence in the project documentation
- developing detailed reference design information for inclusion in the ITN documentation
- assisting with the preparation of output specifications from the standard Partnerships for Schools model.

Contributing to selection of private sector partner

- co-ordinating bid evaluation and establishing the weighting given to elements of the bid (architectural design, technical details, operational issues and educational ethos)
- assisting in the briefing of bidding consortia on design requirements (presenting at open days and communicating the evaluation criteria, for example)
- evaluating the design teams put forward by consortia, to inform the selection of a shortlist. Participating in interviews with bidders and their architect and design teams.

Design stage

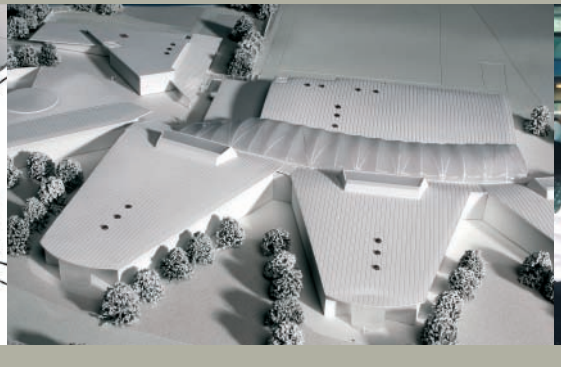
- checking the design and construction proposals submitted by bidders and advising on the emerging designs
- using DQIs and BRE's environmental assessment method (BREEAM) to evaluate the design proposals
- checking the contract documentation to ensure that the designs in the detailed drawings and specifications meet the standard requested in the brief
- checking that design quality is maintained during preferred bidder stage
- negotiating the final design and technical details with bidders.

After formation of the LEP

The role of the CDA reduces following the formation of the LEP and during the development of subsequent (non-sample) schemes. However the CDA continues to be an important source of advice to the LEA and to individual schools as new briefs are prepared and designs proposed.

The CDA should continue to monitor construction of projects and their facilities management to ensure that the private sector partner and the teams working for the LEP are delivering the service as agreed in the contract. There is a risk over time of compromise of the standards of non-sample schemes and of failure to achieve promised improvements. The client design advisor's continuing presence is one means of avoiding this risk.

In addition, many of the CDA's responsibilities as described above will be relevant and necessary for later projects in the LEP programme.



Working with a client design advisor

The client design advisor is a resource available to both the LEA and individual schools and provides them with access to high-level knowledge and experience of the design and construction process. The CDA's input helps to ensure they are adequately prepared and clear about their requirements and can make the most of the opportunities that BSF presents.

The CDA can supplement the LEA's own skills and provide a focus for achieving best value results from an intensive and fast moving process. Schools can use the CDA to work with their staff, governors, pupils and local community to define their needs and aspirations and to ensure they are achievable and fully presented.

Independent advice on design matters is seen as essential. In the past LEAs have on occasion appointed one company to provide all the technical services associated with a building project, from legal advice to monitoring the construction site. An independent design advisor has been shown to produce stronger design results.

Skills and capacity

A client design advisor for Building Schools for the Future projects will be a qualified architect with:

- access to the required range of expertise and design skills, dependant on the scope of the project (a shadow design team may be required, comprised of qualified professionals such as landscape architects, building services engineers and structural engineers)
- experience of complex building projects (a single secondary school typically has a construction value of £15 million and a mainly remodelled school £5 million to £10 million)
- a strong understanding of school design (this is preferred; alternatively there must be a clear collaboration with a named colleague within the advisor team who does have this experience)
- a track record of design excellence and delivery in any sector
- an understanding of the relevant procurement processes
- knowledge or experience of output specification, brief preparation and selection criteria
- the ability to work collaboratively and to consult with stakeholders
- excellent communication and project management skills
- an understanding of good health and safety practices
- ability to work with young people
- good references from past clients.

From October 2005, an accreditation scheme run by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) will be available to verify the skills of individuals who can fulfil this role. Associated continuing professional development sessions will keep RIBA-accredited CDAs regularly updated on relevant information and responsibilities.

Appointing an advisor

To ensure the best independent advice, CABE recommends that the client design advisor appointment be made directly by the LEA. This ensures that both the LEA and the individual schools have direct access to the CDA and that advice is independent of other parties involved in the programme.

Professionals outside the LEA staff can be appointed, in which case the relevant procurement procedure will apply. Alternatively, the LEA may have an appropriate in-house architect able to provide the advisor service required.

In many cases, the scale of work likely to be carried out by a LEP over several years can result in the value of the CDA's work exceeding the EU Services threshold. In such cases, advertising in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) is required (http://ted.publications.eu.int/official/ explains the thresholds and offers free access to an online version of the OJEU, updated daily). Placing simultaneous notices in the architectural press might also be considered.

The RIBA client services team can provide a long list of suitable architects, with selection by location and/or sector experience. From October 2005, RIBA-accredited client design advisors will be available in accordance with the certification scheme (see 'Skills and capacity' above). For more information, ring 020 7307 3700 or visit www.ribafind.org.

Fees should be individually negotiated with client design advisors and are in part dependant on the scope and extent of services they are required to provide.

→ CONSTRUCTION

→ OCCUPATION + USE

The role of client design advisors

The most important decisions in the life of a building project are those made at the start of the development process such as the long-term educational and building premises strategies, site selection and planning and the potential for other, combined uses. These decisions will shape the environment and the functioning of the school for decades to come and must be right. To achieve the best results, it is essential that client design advisors are involved from the earliest possible opportunity.

As LEPs build many schools over a period of several years, all those involved in LEPs and working with them – LEAs, schools, local authorities and architects – need to know how to establish a precedent for high standards at the outset.

CDAs can work with the BSF team within the LEA or with those in charge of individual schools, and sometimes both. All LEAs should ensure that they have appointed a CDA who is reporting directly to them.

The tools

A range of design and specification tools for the development of school designs are available. It is expected that a CDA will use:

- The design quality indicator (DQI) involves stakeholders in assessing design quality at defined stages in the design and delivery of the building. A schools-specific version is being developed for use on all BSF projects. www.dqi.org.uk
- The Building Research Establishment environmental assessment method (BREEAM) assesses the environmental performance of buildings. There is a specific version available for school projects, BREEAM Schools. All BSF projects will be expected to use BREEAM Schools and to report back the results. www.breeam.org/schools.html
- *Building Bulletins* are produced by the DfES and give detailed guidance on school design (see 'Further reading').
- A standard output specification will be provided by Building Schools for the Future. This is for adaption to the requirements and aspirations of individual schools.
- In 2002 the DfES ran a design competition to produce innovative proposals for learning environments of the future. The results are recorded in a publication, *Exemplar designs*. While not directly replicable, they provide some useful ideas and can be used for aiding brief development and raising design aspirations. www.bsf.gov.uk www.teachernet.gov.uk

Further reading

- *The School Works toolkit* (School Works 2001)
- *Client guide: achieving well designed schools through PFI* (CABE 2002)
- *Building Bulletin 98: briefing framework for secondary school projects* (DfES 2004)
- *Building Schools for the Future: a new approach to capital investment* (DfES 2004)
- *Schools for the Future: Building Bulletin 95* (DfES 2002)
- *Schools for the Future: exemplar designs, concepts and ideas* (DfES 2004)
- *Schools for the Future: transforming schools an inspirational guide* (DfES 2005)
- *Creating excellent buildings: a guide for clients* (CABE 2003)
- *A guide for school governors: developing school buildings* (RIBA 2000)
- *21st Century Schools: learning environments for the future* (Building Futures 2003)
- *Being involved in school design: a guide for school communities, local authorities, funders and construction teams* (CABE 2004)
- *Local authority design champions* (CABE 2004)

All CABE publications are available in PDF form at www.cabe.org.uk

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) is the government's expert advisor on architecture, urban design and public space.

With thanks to Partnerships for Schools.

RIBA

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