A small working party of the Northern Regional SLT Managers Group has, with the larger group’s support and input from SLTs in the North East, developed a strategic model for best practice in provision of regional group (as opposed to individual) continuing professional development (CPD) for SLTs. The aim was to create a regional CPD network that incorporates different levels of CPD activity and provision, clinical supervision mechanisms, use of the evidence base, research capacity development and research activity. The working party comprised, at different times, Alison Proudfoot and Jane Giles, Newcastle and North Tyneside Community Health; Nikki Wray, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust; and Anne Brewis, City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust (now retired). The strategy is based on a model for a CPD network developed by Alison Proudfoot (figure one). The interconnected partners in collaboration are: ■ The North East Regional SLT Manager’s Group. ■ Newcastle University, as the provider of pre- and post-registration training in the region; research collaborations with SLTs; student involvement in evidence-based practice (EBP) and research through clinical placements. ■ The Northern Research Specific Interest Group (SIG), as provider of training and support in EBP and research to SLTs. ■ Members of the SIGs and CPD groups in the region. ■ The North East Speech Therapists’ Association (NESTA), a well-established organiser of CPD for local SLTs. An early scoping exercise showed the established CPD groups in the North East served different purposes – from SIGs where SLTs of all levels of experience share expertise and knowledge in a specific area through formal and informal activities, to groups of specialist and senior SLTs providing peer support, clinical supervision or strategic development on a regional level. To ensure members attending were clear about the benefits to them, their service, clients and the wider profession, the purpose of each group was identified and the clinical focus mapped onto the RCSLT Clinical Guidelines eg, fluency, voice disorders etc. Over the past few months the groups were set the task of implementing the best practice guidelines. All groups will have a service manager to champion their cause, link them into national strategy and guide the agenda. Each group will have a defined focus on a clinical subject and be led by expert and highly-specialist clinicians in the region. Agreed yearly work plans will be developed and supported by the management champion, to ensure attendance of appropriate staff at meetings and dissemination of CPD through services. The role of the Northern Research SIG has evolved to include an additional remit to support use of evidence and research developments in other CPD groups, with a member from each of the other groups joining the SIG with that specific role in mind. The result of these changes will be a more focused, coordinated and cost-effective plan for CPD, EBP and research. The programmes of work will link into national strategies and so meet the needs of SLTs and services more readily. The groups will also link into CPD opportunities that have been developed at Newcastle University in collaboration with speech and language therapy services. These include masters level study in EBP, CPD modules that can accumulate into professional practice qualifications, and heavily discounted attendance at conferences, such as the Child Language Seminar in June 2011.

Helen Stringer, Lecturer/SLT
Newcastle University. Email: h.b.stringer@ncl.ac.uk

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