

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 5th September 2014

Education Support Services – Commissioning and Contract Performance Report for School Improvement

Recommendations

1. That the Select Committee note the progress made in developing the approach to commissioning and contract managing school support services
2. That the Select Committee receives the update on performance of the contract for education support services.

Report of Cllr Ben Adams – Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

Summary

In April 2013 the County Council's new commissioning arrangement for a range of School Support Services came into operation. Services that had previously been provided by the authority directly to schools were transferred to the new joint venture company Entrust, through a commissioned and contracted arrangement. Entrust was established to provide a commercial offer to schools – where schools can choose to purchase services and products from Entrust's extensive offer of services to schools. In addition, the County Council commissions a suite of local authority services covering school support services; information advice and guidance services; and learning technology services. There are services to the County Council covering catering, cleaning, grounds and property that are also commissioned to be provided by Entrust.

The focus of this report is on services commissioned by the County Council from Entrust linked to the overarching strategic commissioning outcome: "Staffordshire children and young people to get the best start in life and receive a good education, so that they can make a positive contribution to future communities".

This cluster of services (Cluster A in the Service Delivery Agreement) covers:

- School Support and Intervention (School Improvement)
- Curriculum Development
- Governors
- Early Years
- SEND Advisory
- Education Inclusion
- Elective Home Education
- Minority Ethnic Achievement
- SEN Support Services
- Behaviour, Health and Wellbeing

Since its inception, there has been significant development of the commissioned and contracted services in order to deliver high quality education support services that directly impact on improving outcomes for Staffordshire children and young people. This report updates Select Committee on the progress and improvement that has been made and provides a summary of performance, as requested.

Report

Background

At the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee meeting held on 24th January 2014, it was requested that an update be reported back to the committee reviewing the progress and performance of the education support services commissioning arrangement and contract.

The primary provider of SCC commissioned education support services is Entrust, which was established on 1st April 2013 as a joint venture between the County Council and Capita Plc. The County Council owns a 49% stake in Entrust and has two directors on the board (Ian Parry, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Transformation, and Darryl Evers, the Head of Economic Planning and Deputy Director Place). There are established governance mechanisms in place in regards to the Entrust Company, and in order to secure appropriate scrutiny and oversight, a review is being led by John Tradewell and Anne-Marie Davidson.

As well as the contractual relationship between the County Council and Entrust, and the role of Entrust as an agent in helping schools improve their performance, the success of Entrust is important to the County Council in two other key respects:

Economic Prosperity – Entrust is one of the largest private sector employers in Staffordshire and its future success is important in order to retain existing, and create new, employment opportunities in the county

Financial Benefits – If Entrust is successful the County Council will benefit financially from dividends deriving from its role as shareholder.

Progress in Commissioning School Support and Improvement Services

Significant steps have been taken to secure the robust, effective and efficient commissioning and delivery of school improvement services. Since April 2013 the significant steps include the development of a Service Delivery Agreement with clear service specification, outcome measures and key performance indicators; the establishment of contract monitoring mechanisms and performance reporting formats that support review of activity against key outcomes and enable continuous improvement; and a schedule and structure of commissioner-provider meetings established that secures effective strategic and operational management of the services.

Further work has been done to set out how the commissioning relationship operates, with Staffordshire's school improvement approach set out in a Framework for School Improvement available through the following link:

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/School-Admin/School-Improvement/Key-documents.aspx>

Appendix A to this report sets out as an infographic the way that the commissioning of school improvement works, and the ways in which this work is quality assured and impact assessed. These have been shared with schools as a further explanation of how SCC's commissioning via Entrust operates. It is significant to note that as an impartial measure, Ofsted comments on the support provided by the Local Authority to schools, which includes that commissioned by Entrust, reveals 95% positive comment.

In addition to reports on the contractual Key Performance Indicators, a set of volumetrics provide tracking intelligence for commissioners. For example, July's monthly monitoring report from Entrust on school improvement services shows that 85 individual schools have been supported with school intervention and support activity since April 2014 (this does not include schools attending commissioned training events); with 1524 days of support commissioned. These are also mapped into the 5 key school improvement priorities (as set out in the Learning and Skills strategy and the Framework for School Improvement:

1 - Excellent Education	1064
2 - Good/Outstanding	160
3 - Monitor challenge	76.5
4 - Attainment and progress	220.5
5 - Floor standards	3
Grand Total	1524

The impact of our school improvement activity is measured in a number of ways, spanning from the specific outcome measures associated with individual commissions, through to the high level strategic objectives such as the % of schools graded as good or outstanding.

As part of the County Council's annual self assessment of our school improvement function, the team is currently reviewing the range of impact measures. Analysis of this summer's attainment and achievement - results across the key stages of education – will inform this. Notably, the increase in schools graded good or outstanding – having reached 78% in July 2014 from a baseline of 65% in August 2012 – is a key measure of progress that illustrates the impact of school improvement efforts from schools as well as from the support provided by the local authority.

Investment and Development

Alongside the improvements made to commissioning and delivery arrangements the Entrust company has made significant investments and changes since its inception.

Appendix B illustrates the nature of the school improvement commissioned activity and impact that this has. The joint working between the school leading its own school improvement action; SCC as the commissioner of support and challenge (to target added-value to the school's own programme in order to accelerate improvement and champion high standards and outcomes for pupils); and Entrust as the council's supplier of school improvement activity is an increasingly powerful and appreciated model for delivering a step-change in performance. Respecting the expertise and experience of schools and the critical role of governing bodies in holding school leaders to account, is fundamental to our approach.

Contractual Performance - Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

For each service within the contract there is a set of key performance indicators, with monthly reporting against these. Appendix C sets out the latest SDA contract performance as of June 2014 against the KPIs in Cluster A of the contract relating to school improvement services.

As is evident from this report, delivery is performing well and is on track. As the contractual relationship between Staffordshire County Council and the provider has developed and the ways of working evolved, the KPIs themselves and the manner in which they were linked to volumetrics has been improved, and there are on-going processes to further strengthen the KPI and reporting processes, to align with continuous improvement as commissioner seek to stretch and challenge.

Summary and Conclusion

Over the last 12-18 months of operation there has been significant progress both in terms of the operating practices and mechanisms related to commissioning for school improvement services, and in regard to the impact assessment of the commissioned activity.

The relationship between commissioned activity and improved outcomes is continuing to strength, and commissioners are increasingly able to evidence the impact of their commissioned work both through more robust and extended tracking of contract measures and through the evaluation of priority outcomes.

As the operation of the commissioner–provider relationship matures, and as school partners and stakeholders grow in both familiarity and confidence, Staffordshire County Council is well positioned to achieve its ambitious goals of all schools being good and outstanding and all learners getting access to the very best learning and skills opportunities, that in turn underpins our priority outcomes so that Staffordshire people will:

- Be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefit of economic growth
- Be healthier and more independent
- Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their communities.

Link to Strategic Plan

Ensuring that Staffordshire's children and young people can get the best start in life and receive a good education so that they can make a positive contribution to their communities is a priority for the County Council.

Community Impact – None

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Attachments:

Appendix A – Infographic on Commissioning for School Improvement
Appendix B – Infographic on Quality Assurance

Appendix C – Contract KPI report Cluster A services *(Appendix to follow)*