

## **Schools Forum – 5 July 2016**

### **Schools Forum and Families First Update on the work of Local Support Teams and their impact on outcomes for school-age children and young people**

#### **Recommendations:**

1. That Schools Forum notes progress made by Families First in partnership with Headteacher representatives, since the report to the Forum meeting in December 2016.
2. That Schools Forum agrees to receive a further report at its next meeting on the outcome of the repeated Survey to School Leaders on their views of the effectiveness of Local Support Team work to support school aged children and their families.
3. That Schools Forum identify any additional information that they would require for their next meeting, to enable the Forum to resolve on the allocation from the DSG for the continued provision of early help by Local Support Teams.

#### **PART A**

#### **Reasons for recommendations:**

1. At the meeting on 9 December 2015 the Schools Forum agreed to allocate £1.44m from the Dedicated Schools Grant to Families First for the continued provision of support for children and young people in need of 'early help'. This decision was informed by a full report on the outcome of a value for money review of the Local Support Team work on outcomes for children and young people of school age.
2. Schools Forum requested that an update report on progress with the work that had been initiated by the Group be brought to the last meeting before the end of the 2015/16 academic year.

#### **PART B**

#### **Background:**

3. At the meeting on 31 March 2015 the Schools Forum requested a review of the quality and impact of the work of Local Support Teams on outcomes for school-age children and young people. The outcome of the review informed Schools' Forum decision-making on the allocation to Families First from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of £1.44m. This figure has remained unchanged from the previous year. Historically, this financial transfer was agreed at the point of the conclusion of the Extended Schools' programme in 2012, with the principle that it would facilitate the collective funding of

'family/parent support' – that being a key part of the (then) DfES programme. This arrangement has not been formally monitored or reviewed to date, nor has a specific accountability framework been established as part of a commissioner (Schools Forum) and provider (Families First) relationship. The opportunity to work with schools to review the impact of Local Support and Targeted Intervention and to address this deficit was therefore welcomed by Families First.

## **Update on Joint Working with schools to improve the quality and accountability of Local Support Team early help provision**

4. The Reference Group of Headteachers, who volunteered to be involved, steered the work of the Group and signed off the progress and final reports to Schools Forum. The group has continued to meet in order to progress the work that was agreed as an outcome of the Review, has changed its title to the Schools and Local Support Team Partnership Working Group and its Terms of Reference were revised: these are attached as Appendix 1.

### **5. Survey to School Leaders**

One of the main elements of the Review was a county-wide survey to schools and analysed the results. A web-based survey targeting Headteachers, Pastoral Leads and Governors took place during October 2015 and provided an opportunity for Staffordshire schools across all phases to share their views on a range of relevant issues and to evaluate the extent to which the Local Support Teams currently provide value for money. Headteachers took the lead on developing the methodology and questions for the survey. In total 119 completed questionnaires across all school phases were returned. The majority of responses were submitted by Primary Schools (79).

This survey is due to be repeated in June 2016, and the analysis will track changes in the perception and evaluation by headteachers of the work of Local Support Teams.

6. The consistent and overarching priority for the Review was to better understand the impact that the work of Local Support Teams have on **Outcomes for children and young people**, and to ensure that we secured a clear understanding of how schools and LSTs could better work together to secure continuous improvement in the achievement of the most effective support for children and families. As part of this, three themes emerged from each of the consultation processes. These highlighted the need to secure improvement in:

- **Consistency** - of practice by Local Support Teams across all 8 districts, and a county-wide focus on improving the quality of that practice.
- **Capacity** - ensuring that there is a clear and shared understanding of the role of Local Support Teams, and that there is sufficient capacity for them to be able to fulfil that role.
- **Communication** - improving communication between schools and Local Support Teams as an essential component for improved collaboration when working with children and families.

7. Whilst discussing the issues to be explored in the review, the Reference Group identified some actions that were programmed with immediate effect. These have been mainstreamed into LST practice in order to promote communication and consistency, and to secure effective accountability with schools. This has included:

- **Feedback from Children, Young People and Families**

The Voice Project, managed externally to the Local Support Teams in the Families First Business Improvement and Development Team (BIDT), supported the review by securing the views of LST involvement from children, young people and families. This work has continued in two ways:

- (i) Termly consultation with a sample of children and young people.
- (ii) Analysis of feedback questionnaires from children, young people and their parents/carers. These are sent out when involvements are concluded, with a pre-paid envelope. The outcomes are reported in the Local Support Team Data Report Card (see below).

- **Consultation with schools about individual cases**

Amendments are being made to LST business process to ensure that routine consultation with schools takes place at the point of closure of LST involvement: the purpose is to gauge the view of the school on the impact of that involvement.

- A **protocol** for the resolution of disagreement between LST and school staff has been drafted and is awaiting 'sign off' by the Partnership Working Group.
- The practice of jointly auditing case work with headteacher colleagues, using the **Quality Audit** tool that is used for all LST case-file auditing purposes. The tool is attached for information as Appendix 3. This work has been slow to progress and greater emphasis has been placed with LST district management upon the importance of this initiative.
- The production of a termly **Local Support Team Data Report Card** for consideration by the Partnership Working Group. The first report card has been produced in line with agreed timescales and is attached as Appendix 4. This will be presented to the Partnership Working Group at its meeting in June 2016. The report card is currently being disaggregated at district level, so that local conversations can also be had with headteachers about the performance and issues for their district.

## **Proposed Changes to the National Funding Formula**

8. The Local Government Information Unit/Children's Services Network has summarised the implications for the Dedicated Schools Grant [www.lgiu.org.uk](http://www.lgiu.org.uk) This is summarised below:

*On 7 March 2016 the DfE launched its latest plans on introducing a National Funding Formula for schools to redistribute £31 bn of school funding.*

*The intention to move to a national funding formula by 2019/20 is set out but for the next two years and to ease the transition Local Authorities will be allocated the nationally calculated sum for their schools but will use their existing local formula to distribute that sum – the so called 'soft' national funding formula.*

*The DfE are then proposing, as a result of having more “accurate” allocations for DSG Blocks, that the LA Schools Block is 100% allocated to schools with no central retention by LAs.*

*The paper states that LAs will have continuing responsibilities in three main areas:*

- **Securing that sufficient school places are available**, ensuring fair access through admissions and working with schools to develop local transport policies, and taking a lead in crisis management and emergency planning.

- **Ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met**: identifying, assessing and making provision for all children with SEN and disabilities; promoting attendance; and making sure that alternative provision is available for children and young people excluded from school or otherwise unable to attend a mainstream school; leading on safeguarding for those pupils in un-regulated settings, educated at home, tracking children missing education as well as those at risk of extremism; working with schools to ensure they understand and discharge their safeguarding duties; acting as a corporate parent for looked-after children and those adopted from care.

- **Acting as champions for all parents and families**: listening and promoting the needs of parents children and the local community; supporting parents in navigating the system and ensuring children do not fall through the gaps; supporting children, young people and parents to navigate local SEND arrangements (such as providing information, advice and support); and championing high standards locally.

*The DfE recognises that LAs may have insufficient funding to fulfil these responsibilities and that it may need to agree with maintained schools a top slice of their DSG in order to contribute to the costs of these responsibilities.*

9. At present, Staffordshire County Council co-funds the integrated Families First Local Support Teams. For every £1 that DSG contributes, the County Council adds a further £5 so that Local Support Teams (LSTs) can deliver interventions with families with children that have a number of additional needs. These are needs that cannot be met by a single service but that do not meet the threshold for specialist safeguarding intervention as defined in the thresholds set out by the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board –SSCB -Thresholds for Intervention.
10. Notwithstanding the outcome of the national consultation on the White Paper, Families First will need to maintain and enhance its accountability to schools if it is to secure continued financial support for provision of early help services through Local Support Teams into the future – and certainly beyond 2019. The work done thus far has established a sound basis upon which to navigate the next two years and determine the most effective way for future partnership working to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people in need of early help.

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**List of background papers:** None