

Schools Forum –7 December 2016

Recommendations:

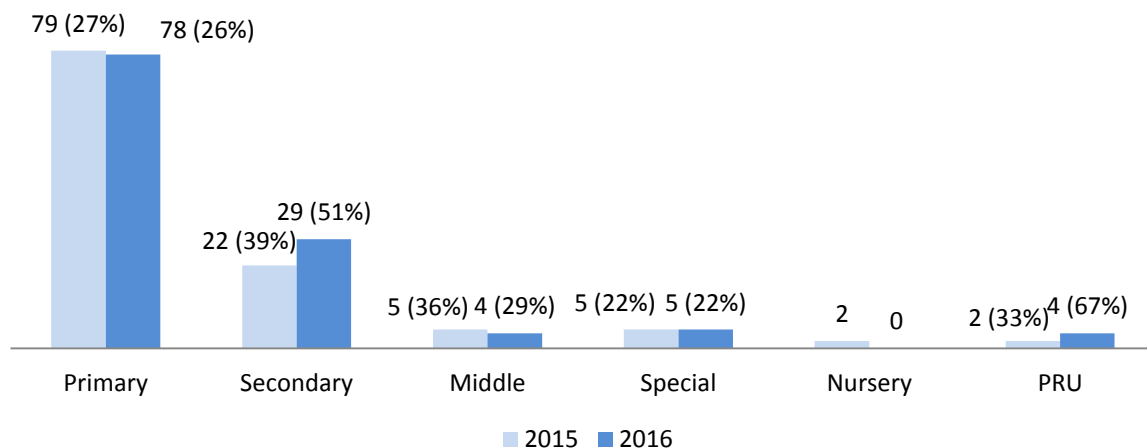
1. That Schools Forum notes progress made by Families First in partnership with Head Teacher representatives, to develop proposals for Local Support Teams (LSTs) to work more effectively with schools in the secondary sector.

PART A

Reasons for recommendations:

2. On 31 March 2015 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 future allocation to Families First from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). 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'. The annual transaction is for £1.44m, and has remained at this level since the grant was originally agreed. This contribution represents 15.8% of the total annual budget for LSTs of £9.1m: schools are consistently represented as circa 40% of the agencies that request support from Local Support Teams.
3. At its meeting on 4 October 2016 Schools Forum received an update from the Schools and Local Support Working Partnership Group on the work of Local Support Teams and school representatives to address issues raised by schools through consultation in Spring / Summer 2015. Their deliberations were informed by the outcome of the Survey of School Leaders on their views of the impact of Local Support Team involvement.
4. This survey was the repeat of a survey undertaken in September 2015. The more recent survey secured a 31% response rate (122 schools): 78 primary, 4 middle, 5 Special and 4 PRUs. Twenty-nine secondary schools responded to the survey: this makes up 51% of all secondary schools in the county.

Response Rate by School Type



5. Schools Forum noted the contrast in satisfaction levels about the effectiveness of the work of Local Support Teams, between schools in the primary and secondary sectors. Primary schools were far more likely to be satisfied, and indeed more satisfied than last year, than secondary schools with the impact that Local Support Teams had on key issues for their students and their families.

Schools Forum asked that a report be prepared for their December 2016 meeting which would demonstrate progress on proposals for possible solutions to resolve issues highlighted by schools in the secondary sector. This brief report places that work in the co text of the wider programme to reshape the Children's System in Staffordshire, and updates on progress in exploring ways of working that can best meet the needs of older children, young people and their families, in partnership with schools.

PART B

Background

6. The report to Schools Forum in October emphasised the recognition that secondary schools, as large complex organisations in their own right, are already delivering wider 'welfare' services to children and families, to varying degrees. The proposition therefore is to find ways to enhance and add value to this work, by exploring the re-shaping of LST provision as part of the wider Children's System Transformation work that is being driven by the Families Strategic Partnership.
7. Since the Forum meeting in October, subsequent discussion has been had with the Schools and Local Support Partnership Working Group which was initially set up in Spring 2015 to drive and manage the programme of review by schools of the impact and quality of the work of Local Support Teams with school aged children and their families. The Group has since expanded and re-shaped its terms of reference, acting as an advisory body to Families First for the continued improvement and performance management of Local Support Teams.
8. The discussion was informed by an analysis of:
 - School involvement in the piloting of new ways of working across the Children's System, in each district.
 - Examples of where District LST's and schools had started to explore different ways of working together
 - The extent to which schools reported the deployment of their own resources in creative ways to meet the welfare needs of children and families.

The purpose of the discussion was to draw out the elements that schools felt best demonstrate the potential for effective 'added value' on the part of Local Support Teams, and to begin to shape a framework within which schools in the secondary sector could play a more significant role as local partners in determining the shape of support for children and families in their local areas.

9. Schools contributed to the analysis of work in each of the districts across the county. It was noted that, in all but one district, schools played a significant role in the shaping and delivering of provision for local families that was being tested out by local pilot projects. Some examples are set out below:

Newcastle: Targeted work with vulnerable groups, and collaboration to deliver early help.

Chesterton Girls Empowerment programme are working with targeted groups of young women considered vulnerable to predation and CSE. Development of a Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) at the King's School in Kidsgrove, with the explicit intention of changing the culture for those agencies working with families to one of collaboration rather than referral.

Cannock: Accessing local voluntary sector provision for families

Geographically-based lower level early help provision has been commissioned in areas of particular challenge. Schools were invited to be part of the process to shape this provision, and the voluntary organisations that have been commissioned are now contacting schools to ensure that they are aware of the new service and use it effectively.

Stafford: Multi-Agency Centre partnership with local community agencies.

One secondary school is working in partnership with local organisations to develop a MAC centre on their site: the school are part funding this alongside some monies from BRFC. There is a plan to involve local businesses in the future. The LSTs will be working from this centre one day a week, with a focus on making the links between the work of the school with that of early help focussed on what is happening in the home, through whole family working.

Tamworth: MACs and multi-agency working.

Two secondary academies have engaged in work to extend the school-based 'Multi-agency Centre' (MAC) model, and involve a newly commissioned Level 2 provider. The LST has been contributed to the design of the additional provision and is supporting the mobilisation of the new service, in partnership with the schools. This includes joint working to audit assessment and case work, in order to ensure quality as well as to avert duplication.

Staffordshire Moorlands: School cluster and wider partnership work, focused on a particular geographical community

The project is focused on children within a specific postcode area with the deployment of a community organisation offering lower level support to families, working closely with local schools. A Food Co-op is at the hub of this project. Schools in the local area, and those further afield who have students from this area on their role, are key partners in this work.

South Staffs: Engaging schools in the commissioning of services.

One secondary and 5 primary phase schools are involved in a district-wide working group that has developed and commissioned a specific Level 2 service. Helping schools to make connections with other services that support families. Discussions are at an early stage about pooling resources in the future.

East Staffs: Engaging schools with the voluntary and community sector.

The focus is on one specific community – Shobnall. Schools are being supported to work with community organisations and access community resources. One primary school is working with Age UK on paired reading and a secondary school is closely involved with a development around the local county farms. Schools are also being actively involved as key partners in work to consult with the local community – children, young people and families in particular – helping to support and encourage local people to become directly involved in a range of community projects. Schools have contributed financial resources to match fund other funding for this work.

Much of this work is in the early stages, but plans are in place to evaluate the impact and track progress of partnership working in delivering improved outcomes for children.

10. The discussion also took account of the extent to which secondary school across the county employed their own mentors, pastoral managers, partnership managers, family

support staff and well-being specialists. In addition, schools regularly contract with local voluntary and independent sector providers for services ranging from enhanced curriculum delivery to one-to-one emotional support for pupils.

11. School representatives at the Schools and Local Support Partnership Working Group, were keen that the following points were highlighted:

- **Schools’ engagement in the commissioning of early help services** can promote the development of stronger and more integrated working between schools and early help services. This could be further developed to provide the opportunity for secondary schools in particular to work with the providers of early help – including LSTs – in influencing local commissioning and service development priorities. Schools are already taking advantage of the opportunity to pool funding with that of other services and/or programmes in order to secure service provision that can then be accessed by children and families. However, this is as much about influencing the deployment of resources as it is about financial commitment.
- **Engaging schools with the voluntary and community sector** provides excellent opportunities for expanding local support for families, particularly where that support incorporates a focus on reducing isolation, securing involvement, practical steps to address poverty and disadvantage, and modelling effective parenting. LSTs are already engaged in supporting the development of community provision, both in their ongoing professional support to BRFC providers, and through their role as one of the lead contributors to the design of the pilot projects. This role could be further developed.
- **Effective targeting of vulnerable individuals, groups and communities worked well when done in partnership** using the collective intelligence not just of schools and the authority, but also of other public sector partners such as the Police and district councils, is a particularly smart way to work. Sometimes it is by making a significant difference with a discrete cohort of families that we are then able to free up resources to support wider preventative work. LSTs already work with a significant proportion of children and families who are ‘on the cusp’ of statutory intervention and have either been ‘stepped down’ from statutory social work or whose circumstances require discussion with social work colleagues. An activity summary for January – August 2016, drawn from data held by Statutory Safeguarding Units, is set out below:

Total Cases Stepped Up/Down by Month in 2016	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	TOTAL
Number of cases stepped down to LSTs	23	73	49	57	66	86	91	76	521
Number of referrals stepped up from LSTs to Safeguarding teams	40	52	55	57	69	44	62	58	437

The LST interface with statutory services and with other specialist and targeted provision – in particular in relation to those issues which impact most significantly upon families eg domestic abuse, substance misuse, poor adult mental health – could be better deployed to assist schools in both influencing the effective targeting of the ‘right’ families, and in effectively navigating the appropriate provision. Secondary schools in particular continue to highlight the importance of improving provision for young people with emotional health needs.

- **'MACs'** – Multi-agency/ family-focused centres on secondary school sites has already made good use of opportunities to work with families and children in a way that was less stigmatizing for them and more convenient for integrated working with partners. This work is complimented by Local Support Teams who are able to work with the family in their home where they can recognise and address issues that would otherwise be either invisible to, or beyond the influence of school-based provision.

Conclusion

12. Schools Forum is urged to recognise that the above is based upon discussion that is still at an early stage, and further discussion is planned not only with the Schools and Local Support Partnership Working Group but also with head teachers in the districts, as part of the programmes of change that are evolving at present and being steered by the Families Strategic Partnership. The Families Strategic Partnership has agreed a 'place-based' approach to be the most effective strategy for developing services that best meet local need. Discussions are at an early stage with partners but effective school engagement is an imperative for the success of this work.
13. The key message is of the importance of collaboration – not just between schools and LSTs but also with commissioners and with a range of other local partners, and communities. The ambition is the effective pooling of resources to support targeted approaches that make a positive difference for those children and young people about whom we are all concerned, at a time when resources are under significant pressure.
14. Whilst this work is developing, there is an opportunity for LSTs to continue to engage with schools and accelerate the practice changes that have so far been identified. It is suggested that these could focus upon:
 - More explicit targeting by the LST of work with those children, young people and families that schools identify as the most vulnerable and/or disengaged. This work to be evidence-based and developed with a clear understanding, with the school and the family, of the outcomes to be achieved.
 - A specific programme to develop more effective joint working between school and LST, with the latter focussed on the home environment and the former concentrating on the individual needs of the student.
 - Exploration of the potential for schools and LSTs to co-design local early help provision drawing learning from the evolution of the MAC model. This would include the pooling of resources, with collective and joint decision-making on the deployment of LST staff.
15. Local Support Team District Leads have been tasked with prioritising discussion with secondary head teachers in particular, to drive this agenda forward.

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November 2016