



Education Scrutiny Committee

6 May 2009

Extended Schools Agenda – Final Report

Background

1. In September 2008 the Committee considered a feasibility report for this topic as registered by Cllr Merrett, and agreed to carry out a review based on the following remit:

Aim

To contribute to the development of processes aimed at ensuring accessibility and a high quality of extended school provision

Objectives:

- i. Examine the proposed role and composition of the Multi-Agency Steering Group to confirm its functions are fit for purpose and that the appropriate partners and Directorates are involved
- ii. Assess the affordability, quality and take-up of childcare and activities for children aged 5-11, and identify ways of ensuring their affordability

Consultation

3. As part of this review, Members consulted with CYC officers from the Extended Schools Service, schools, Local Authority and private providers of childcare and After School Clubs and parents.

First Key Objective - Examine the proposed role and composition of the Multi-Agency Steering Group to confirm its functions are fit for purpose and that the appropriate partners and Directorates are involved

Information Gathered

4. The meeting of the multi-agency Steering Group was held on 4 November 2008. Three members of the Education Scrutiny Committee were in attendance (Cllr Merrett, Cllr Brooks & Cllr Funnell).
5. The Members who attended, reported:
 - a wide representation from Children's Services and the PCT but no private sector partners and only one school present at the meeting

- the meeting comprised a series of speakers on different subjects together with round table group discussions and agreed the content of the meeting and presentations had been good
 - the group was too large to generate a good debate and that too many meetings had been scheduled for the forthcoming year
 - a decision was announced at the meeting to set up a much smaller, tightly focused, strategic steering group, in which schools in particular, would be encouraged to participate - it was made apparent that secondary schools may previously have been given the wrong signal due to the alignment of the group with Early Years
 - the first meeting of the strategic steering group was scheduled to take place in March/April 2009
 - a decision was taken to circulate the minutes of the meetings to a larger network group who will meet once or twice a year (or per term) on a workshop / conference basis, to gather valuable advice and ideas.
6. Those Members who attended the meeting found the presentations useful and informative but were disappointed that no private sector partners and only one school attended the meeting. The Committee discussed the timings of the meetings and whether this affected attendance from private partners and schools. They agreed that that the Multi Agency Steering Group had worked well as an internal briefing session but not in terms of fulfilling an external partnership function, and that the separate Strategic Steering Group would provide the opportunity to include more private providers. In order to maximise attendance, it was suggested that the Assistant Director of Partnerships & Early Intervention write to all private sector providers and secondary schools, to seek their suggestions on partnership working and to invite them to attend.

Conclusion

7. The Committee concluded that the changes agreed would benefit the usefulness of the strategic steering group but agreed to assess the attendance at its first meeting, in order to confirm whether it was now fit for purpose and that all of the appropriate partners and Directorates were participating in the process.

Recommendations Arising From Objective I

8. In regard to Objective I of the review, Members recommend that:
- i. Officers continue to develop the Strategic Steering Group
 - ii. The new Learning & Culture Scrutiny Committee which is due to come into effect from the beginning of the municipal year 2009/10, consider reviewing the development of the Strategic Steering Group in the future

Reason: In order to ensure the Strategic Steering Group is fit for purpose.

Second Key Objective - Assess the affordability, quality and take-up of childcare and activities for children aged 5-11, and identify ways of ensuring their affordability

Information Gathered

9. Officers confirmed that all primary schools are aware that they need to provide childcare on site or to signpost parents to nearby provision. For secondary schools this is replaced by a requirement to provide safe activities where children are accessing supervised high quality activities. Members received information on the costs for After School Clubs across the city, and were informed that:
 - the general approach is that there is a minimum recovery rate of services which schools are recommended to charge for the use of premises. To recover additional expenditure, for example heating, lighting, cleaning and caretaking overheads there is a formula basis incorporating the number of square metres occupied and the length of time used.
 - there is also a table of hire rates that gives more favourable rates to non-profit making organisations or charities and a commercial rate for companies who are for profit. This formal arrangement is supported through Assets and Property Management who also provide information around letting agreements for third parties.
 - Schools can seek financial advice from The Schools Business Support Service and the Extended Schools service team work closely in partnership with them should a dispute or concern over rental charges arise and when new groups are setting up on school sites.
 - Schools are using their extended school money in a variety of ways for example some schools may employ co-ordinators that will work across a locality to ensure there are a variety of activities available for families and their children. Other schools provide out of school activities as well as out of school childcare. Some have provided support for parents.
 - advice was given to schools on the variety of ways in which the money should be spent, consistent with the DCSF guidelines.
 - all schools were recommended to consult with their communities (not just school communities) to ensure what was being delivered was what communities wanted, and had to produce evidence of that consultation, to the Local Authority. It was noted that the responses were of variable quality.

Disadvantage Subsidy Funding

10. The Assistant Director of Partnership & Early Intervention gave the Committee an overview of a new policy initiative around the affordability of Extended Services. The intention of this 'Disadvantage Subsidy Funding' is to provide a comprehensive range of exciting, high quality extended services which are accessible to all children and young people focusing on those disadvantaged by economic circumstances and on children in care.
11. It is recognised that this initiative will only work if there is a degree of co-ordination between clusters of schools. In York, schools do not operate on a

conventional cluster model, and, for the most part, each school decides for itself what Extended Services it will provide. One outcome of the new subsidy will be to encourage a greater degree of collaboration.

12. In 2009-10 each local Authority in England will receive a share of £40m of subsidy funding to pass to disadvantaged families in one or more geographically coherent school clusters, on a pilot basis. In York, this equates to £80k and the Local Authority has set up a pilot cluster made up of the following schools:
 - York High School
 - Westfield Primary School
 - Hob Moor Primary School
 - Woodthorpe Primary School
13. The intention is that the money will be used to enable families to access existing services or to purchase new services not currently available. The mechanism for disadvantaged families to claim their entitlement have yet to be identified and put in place. One suggestion is that schools claim back reimbursement for the Extended Services provided to each family with disadvantaged children.
14. The initial suggestion from government is that 'disadvantaged children' are defined as those receiving free school meals and/or 'looked after children'. However, it is open to each local Authority to extend this definition if it can be afforded, and operated fairly. The assumption is that the subsidy will equate to approximately £300 per family per year, and the expected take-up is 60% of those eligible.
15. The criteria for being eligible for free schools meals is that parents/guardians should be in receipt of one of the following benefits: Income Support; Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related); Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance; Child Tax Credit with an income of less than £15,575 and NOT receiving Working Tax Credit; support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; or Guarantee element of State Pension
16. In 2010-11, the Disadvantage Subsidy Funding will rise to £217m to be used by all schools across England. After 2011 the intention seems to be that Extended Services funding will be mainstreamed into schools' budgets.
17. In order to assess affordability, quality and take-up, Members agreed to:
 - a. carry out site visits to a number of after school clubs - In November 2008, Members visited the after school club at Yearsley Grove Primary School, and in early December 2008, Members visited the after school clubs at Wheldrake Primary School and Fishergate Primary School. Following the success of those site visits, Members decided to visit one more site and agreed to visit Westfield School where there are two clubs being run on the site - one by the school and one through a private provider (Kaleidoscope). This visit was carried out in January 2009. The findings from all the visits are shown at Annex A.

- b. issue a survey to all families in the city with a six year old child attending a Local Authority school - it was agreed that the survey should be designed to enable families to include their views in regard to any other children in their immediate family. The planned survey was sent out in December 2008, with a 'return by' date of 16 January 2009. 246 surveys were returned, and the information was collated. The findings together with an analysis of the information is shown at Annex B.
- c. write to every school and private provider to request any information they may hold which identifies the needs of families within their local community. The letters was sent out in early January 2009, with a 'return by' date of 6 February 2009. Only three responses were received, one of which was from New Earswick Primary School. Members were impressed with the quality of the information produced by the school for parents, and the Chair of the Committee wrote to the school to pass on the Committee's comments.
- d. hold an informal consultation session and invite Eddie Needham from ContinYou (Government Advisors on Extended Services) to give a presentation on the national picture regarding extended school services, and provide a comparison of the provision in York against other Education Authorities. In order to encourage attendance at the informal consultation session, a flyer advertising the event was sent to all schools and private providers and copies of the flyer were displayed at local libraries from early February 2009. The event was held following a formal committee meeting on 24 February 2009 and the presentation (Annex D to agenda item 4) can be viewed at:
<http://sql003.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.asp?CId=443&MId=4991&Ver=4>

Analysis

18. In regard to the survey results, Members concluded that:
 - i. Take-up varied across the city due to a number of factors, with cost being the main factor
 - ii. A significant number of families who responded could not afford the available provision therefore evidencing the issue of affordability
 - iii. the level of satisfaction was high amongst those using the provision therefore evidencing the good quality of that provision, where it was available
 - iv. In some areas of the City, the wrap round childcare provision does not always support parents to go back to work and the high cost of transport threatens the sustainability and usability of childcare
19. In regard to the consultation event, Members expressed their thanks to Eddie Needham and concluded that:
 - i. The findings of the Committee in regard to this review represented the issues found nationally

- ii. All schools are now responsible for the promotion of community cohesion, well-being and the happiness of the children attending their school
20. The Committee also acknowledged the importance of the 21st Century School Agenda for families.
21. Those officers from within the Extended Services team who have supported this review, identified that the following would benefit Extended Services in York:
- The establishment of a strategic stakeholder group which included private sector representation
 - Operational issues should be quickly fed into the stakeholder group to inform and influence future policy
 - Schools should acknowledge that stakeholders and partners delivering services on school sites need a clear pricing or lettings policy that covers all costs to the school. Those costs should not disadvantage schools but also need to be affordable by the stakeholders and providers i.e. clear concessionary arrangements
 - Senior management on school sites should identify a point of contact who has responsibility for each element of the core offer (or one person responsible for all elements). This person should value and respect good partnership working in all aspects of delivering the core offer.
 - Emphasis should be placed on all services paying due regard to and prioritising:
 - Quality
 - Accessibility
 - Affordability – both collectively and individually
 - Inclusive provision
 - Flexibility in (a) adapting to the needs of the local community; (b) for individual parents/carers needing comprehensive extended provision in order to take up work

Recommendations Arising from Objective II

22. In regard to objective II of the review, Members recommend that:
- i. The Childcare Sufficiency Audit be broadened to include Extended Services with a particular focus on accessibility, affordability, inclusive provision, and flexibility as detailed in the final bullet point of paragraph 21
 - ii. All local Authority schools in York identify a member of staff and a Governor responsible for Extended Services and community cohesion

- iii. The Executive Member for Children & Young People's Services commission two reports highlighting how the issues raised in the final bullet point of paragraph 21 can be addressed. The reports to be on:
 - ways of improving cluster arrangements and the establishment of a number of Extended Services Partnership Co-ordinators for York schools with the options for the medium / long term funding of these posts
 - how best to use the 'Disadvantage Subsidy Funding' (outlined in paragraphs 10-16 above)
- iv. The findings and recommendations arising from this review be brought to the attention of the Ofsted Sub-Committee and school improvement partners to inform their on-going work

Implications

23. There have been some financial implications arising from carrying out this review. During the time span of this review, Scrutiny Management Committee increased the budget for scrutiny reviews from £250 to £500. The cost of producing the survey was met by using £200 of the scrutiny budget allocated to this review. The remaining cost was met by The Extended Schools Service. In regard to the consultation event, the cost of producing the flyer, room hire at the Mansion House and the provision of refreshments was all met from the balance of the budget allocated to this review.
24. There are no known Financial, Legal, Equalities, or HR, implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Corporate Priorities

25. The remit for this review supports Corporate Priority No.7 – 'Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city'.

Risk Management

26. Without the thorough engagement of current users and extended schools service providers the findings from this review would have been limited and insufficient to support and evidence the recommendations arising from the review. There are also risks associated with not carrying out the work detailed in recommendation (iii) shown in paragraph 22.

Contact Details

Author:

Melanie Carr
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Services
Tel No.01904 552063

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Dawn Steel
Democratic Services Manager

Interim Report Approved

Date

23 April 2009

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Scoping report dated 28 October 2008 and interim reports dated 3 December 2008, 7 January 2009, 24 February 2009 & 7 April 2009

Annexes:

Annex A – Findings from visits to After School Clubs

Annex B – Findings & Analysis from returned surveys

Education Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Keith Aspden (Chair)
Councillor Jenny Brooks (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tina Funnell
Councillor Keith Hyman
Councillor Dave Merrett
Councillor Jonathan Morley
Dr David Sellick (Co-opted Statutory Member)
Mr Bill Schofield (Cop-opted Statutory Member)