

Children's Services, Education and Skills Transformation Programme

BUSINESS CASE

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**Release: v 1.0
Date: 30/7/14**

1. Introduction

This document provides the outline business case for the proposed transformed School Improvement and Skills Service as part of the Children's Services, Education and Skills Transformation Programme.

Within the document, our proposed themes for transformation are described and Members are asked to approve the new model for implementation.

2. Context

The Rewiring Public Services Programme is the City of York Council's transformation programme and was introduced in October 2013 to help the Council effectively manage the major challenges ahead. The transformation programme recognises that we need to be a more responsive and more flexible Council – a Council that puts residents first.

Since 2010 there has been a growth of school autonomy. In the schools white paper, *The importance of teaching*, the government declared that 'the primary responsibility for improvement rests with schools themselves' (DfE 2010). In York the approach to school improvement since 2010 has been to develop systems to support sector led school improvement whilst preventing fragmentation. In 2011 this led to the formation of the York Education Partnership (YEP). Since 2010 local authorities have been changing their approaches to school improvement. Where local authorities continue to offer services, they are now increasingly doing so on a traded basis as one option among an increasingly diverse range of school improvement support. Local authorities are, however, expected to maintain oversight of local education provision, champion the interests of children, and commission school improvement from their local system-leading schools (Wilshaw 2013). These expectations underpin the transformation of the School Improvement and Skills Service in York which has been identified to deliver £350k transformation savings.

3. Priorities

The priorities within the City of York school improvement strategy that will direct the transformation programme are:

- Ensuring all schools are good or better, with and increasing number that are outstanding
- Raising attainment and achievement for all children and young people
- Improving life chances for all children and young people
- Narrowing the gap between the most vulnerable children and young people and their peers
- Further developing the LA's strategic role as a commissioner of school improvement services
- Working with schools and other partners to raise the aspirations of all children and young people

4. Current Model

Currently there is a large core team of school improvement advisers and subject consultants who provide advice and guidance across Early Years, Primary and Secondary settings and schools. The team is made up of professional, well respected employees who are qualified to give a wide range of advice, support and challenge to primary and secondary schools. The work of the advisers in the team tends to be at a whole school strategic level and is focused on quality assurance, strategic leadership and monitoring school performance and intervention. The School Improvement Team continues to include a school improvement partner role (York Challenge Partners), this role is discharged by some members of the adviser team and three external consultants all of whom are accredited school improvement partners. Despite the fact that the statutory duty to appoint school improvement partners was removed in 2010 York headteachers and governing bodies continue to value the York Challenge Partner role. The subject consultants in the team provide specific support and advice in English, mathematics and science across both the primary and secondary phases. The School Improvement and Skills teams also has specific posts focused on providing schools, colleges and other providers with specialist advice and support about the Raising of the Participation Age, 14-19 curriculum and skills agenda.

There is also an Admin support team of 5.4 FTE.

5. Engagement and Consultation

The process of engagement and consultation with headteachers and governors has been on-going since September 2013 through

the termly director's briefings, the annual headteacher conference in March 2014 and an engagement questionnaire which was sent to headteachers in July 2014. A regular dialogue has also been maintained with headteachers through the half termly meetings of cluster chairs, the meetings of the York Education Partnership Board and the primary and secondary headteachers forums. This regular dialogue has been used to inform the development of a co-constructed model of school improvement which blends school to school support with support from external consultants and members of the City of York Council's School Improvement team. The development of the School Improvement Commissioning Group (SICG) in 2013-14 has created stronger mechanisms to support the commissioning of school improvement and its functions are:

- To support the LA to carry out its statutory responsibilities with regard to school performance and interventions
- To agree the strategic direction for school improvement in the City of York and agree common procedures for the use of funding to build capacity for school to school support
- To agree the principles for school to school support and cluster/partnership support
- To review the performance and progress of all schools using data in the public domain to ensure that the tiers of intervention are appropriately mapped according to the needs of schools
- To ensure that decisions about school to school support and other interventions are transparently shared with all schools
- To monitor and evaluate the impact of funded interventions on improving outcomes (Including pupils achievement, quality of teaching and Ofsted outcomes)
- To report (through the Assistant Director, Education and Skills) to the YEP Board on the impact of interventions on improving outcomes

6. Proposed Model

The co-designed proposed model will see CYC move away from a large core team operating in a traditional way to a new model with a focus on further developing school led improvement and a commissioned service.

6.1. Core Focus

It is intended that the overall core focus of the new School Improvement and Skills team will be to fulfil the statutory role of the Local Authority as described in the 1996 Education Act which is to:

- Securing sufficient places for the education of children and young people in their area between the ages of 2 and 19 (up to 25 for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities).
- Supporting vulnerable children and young people
- Promoting high standards in primary and secondary education

6.2. Team Focus

Posts within the School Improvement and Skills team will focus on:

- Strategic leadership, performance, interventions, commissioning
- School improvement around leadership
- School improvement for underperforming and coasting schools
- Key priorities identified in the Council Plan and Strategic Plan for School Improvement
- Vulnerable groups
- Support for the new Ofsted framework
- Narrowing the Gap and work supporting the families of schools
- Statutory responsibilities

6.3. Key Elements

There will be two key elements to the new School improvement and Skills team:

6.3.1 The Retained Team

The retained team will consist of a small group of LA officers whose main role will be focussed on

- monitoring of school performance
- the impact of interventions
- quality assure commissioned support for schools

The Retained Team will:

- Report to and support the work of the York Education Partnership
- Monitor performance and the impact of interventions
- Focus on the priorities related to education and skills identified in the Council Plan and other strategic plans
- Commission or broker appropriate interventions at the appropriate level to ensure that school's not yet good move to good within two years
- Link with other service arms within the LA
- Link with partners including Health
- Liaise and meet with the DfE on a termly basis

6.3.2 The Commissioned Provider team

The commissioned provider team will be made up of three groups

- a traded service purchased by schools (including subject consultants and York Challenge Partners)
- colleagues from schools i.e. school to school support
- independent external providers who will be commissioned to provide support for York schools.

The Commissioned Provider Team will:

- Implement school improvement strategies around subject specific advice and guidance, subject underperformance, middle leadership, narrowing the gap
- Work with clusters of schools to support improved performance across a geographical cluster
- Respond quickly to requests from York schools for support
- Be commissioned to provide intervention and support to York schools that are causing concern

7. Funding

The CYC General Fund is able to fund the smaller CYC retained team to enable the LA to carry out its statutory role around monitoring school performance, promoting high standards and supporting vulnerable children including LAC and SEND.

It is expected that beyond July 2015, funding for the provider team will largely, if not completely, be dependent on services being

purchased by CYC schools and schools in other LAs and also other LAs / providers.

The proposed model achieves the target savings of 350k.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the above in order for School Improvement and Skills to build a sustainable model which has the flexibility to respond to schools needs