Schools Funding - Support to vulnerable pupils

1. Background

School funding reforms have resulted in centrally held Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the support and expertise currently provided through the Race and Equality and Diversity Service (READS) being delegated to maintained schools from 1st April 2013 (funding is already delegated to academies).

In addition, funding currently included in the Pupil Referral Service budget to support pupils at risk of exclusion will also be delegated to schools. Pupils Referral Units will be formally established as schools with delegated funding to educate permanently excluded pupils from 1 April 2013. Schools have been asked to commit to buying back an early intervention service from the PRU schools. The majority of secondary schools have agreed to buy back but only a minority of primary schools.

The Department for Education (DfE) has consulted local authorities and academies on future funding of education functions not funded through the DSG, for example, the Education Welfare Service. This approach would effectively remove the element of funding for education that is included in the overall local authority formula settlement and allow the DfE to retain the funding at the centre. The academies’ share would then be allocated to academies through the Education Funding Agency. A new education grant will be introduced which will allocate limited funding to local authorities (for functions including the Director of Children’s Services role, responsibility for school attendance including prosecuting parents for their children’s non attendance and school place planning). In addition local authorities will receive grant funding to cover the estimated costs of providing services to maintained schools. This grant will reduce over time as more schools become academies. The new grant arrangements are likely to lead to a significant loss of funding for the county council.

The council has offered buy back for a number of services but it is clear that they are not financially viable in their current form, for example, READS is projected to overspend by around £130k in the current year once adjustments for academy conversions have been made. Of the funding transferred to academies only 16% is currently recouped through buy back income.

2. Vulnerable Pupils

The loss of central DSG and formula grant funding together with changes to the Pupils Referral Service will require the council to reduce spending on a number of central services which support vulnerable children and young people, such as Education Welfare Service (EWS), the Race Equality and Diversity Service (READS) and Area Education Officers (AEOs). In these circumstances there is a risk that outcomes for some of our most vulnerable children and young people deteriorate unless action is taken. The risks include possible increases in absence from schools, fixed term and permanent exclusions, juvenile crime and referrals to social care as
well as widening the attainment gap for vulnerable pupils in comparison with their peers.

3. Proposal for a new service

In order to provide some mitigation to the risks outlined above and to meet the local authority’s statutory responsibilities on attendance, exclusions, securing school places and promoting good outcomes for vulnerable children, Cabinet recommended the development and implementation of proposals for a new reduced core service which would be in place even if all schools were academies.

3.1 Funding

Funding for this service will be met from the high needs block of the DSG and the new education grant for core statutory functions. The estimated cost of the service is £1.3m.

3.2 The objectives

A detailed commissioning brief has been drawn up setting out the key outcomes and providing a service specification. The key objective is that children and young people achieve their educational potential, and the education gap is narrowed, through -

- Ensuring children and young people access their curriculum entitlement by:
  - not being missing from education and having good school attendance
  - meeting the needs of those educated at home or who cannot attend school for medical reasons
  - Parents and children understanding the school admission’s process
  - Parents and children understanding their entitlement to SEN support
- The time children miss school due to exclusion is reduced
- Children are safe, not exploited or missing education because of employment or performing

3.3 The functions (see attached sheet)

- Ensuring that schools understand their new responsibilities and working with them to ensure they have access to appropriate advice and support
- Working in partnership with schools where systemic issues have been identified, for example high levels of persistent absence, or at crisis points such as a large influx into one school of pupils with English as an Additional Language
- Carrying out the local authority’s statutory duties in relation to attendance and exclusions

3.4 The process

Representatives from a range of teams including READS, EWS, AEOs, Admissions, SEN and Localities Targeted Intervention Teams have attended several meetings to
discuss the scope of the new team. Discussions will be needed with schools and
academies to ensure that the new service will be able to successfully engage with
and support schools where necessary.

Once the structure for the new service has been determined, there will be a formal
consultation with all staff affected by the changes. Appointments will be made before
the end of January 2013 with redundancy notices issued by 30th January 2013.

**Issues to consider:**

There are a number of issues to consider in establishing this new service:

1. How to ensure schools/academies welcome and co-operate with the new
   service

2. How to support schools to take on their additional responsibilities

3. How to develop mechanisms, such as information sharing, to identify schools
   where vulnerable pupils may be at risk

4. How to ensure the new service is effectively targeted where it can have most
   impact

5. Ensuring staff in the new service are suitably skilled and able to influence
   practice in schools

6. Should a recommendation be made to the next Scrutiny Committee that a
   session is arranged to explore and discuss the future role of the local authority
   in education in the context of the academy agenda? This session could be
   open to all members of the new council.
Statutory duties regarding attendance and exclusions

Where there are systemic issues in schools/clusters or at crisis points:

- Review and analysis to identify priorities and actions leading to joint commissioning with the school/cluster

Information, support and advocacy to parents

- Information and guidance to Schools via website and advice line
- Data analysis and monitoring to inform areas of concern
- Liaison with other agencies working with vulnerable cyp
- Relationship building with Schools and other networks of support
- Facilitation to school staff to enable effective take-up of ‘new’ responsibilities

Safeguarding knowledge and awareness
### Vulnerable Children and Young People’s Service – Enabling Education Service (DRAFT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Skills and knowledge</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support and advocacy to Parents</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge and understanding of cultural differences that may affect specific groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liaison with hard to reach young people &amp; communities e.g. Traveller/Gypsy Roma</td>
<td>Ability to champion CAF as an effective means to understand needs of vulnerable cyp (individual and groups)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working links with teams working with vulnerable cyp</td>
<td>Analytical skills and ability to use variety of data sources to inform and evidence needs and areas of concern</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring and analysis of data &amp; intelligence: ensuring good flow of knowledge, identifying vulnerable cyp and analysis of issues affecting access to education</td>
<td>Ability to form effective multi-agency relationships and contribute to creative approaches to affect positive change for vulnerable cyp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensuring school leaders understand new levels of responsibilities:</td>
<td>Knowledge of school systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advice line</td>
<td>Ability to form relationships with school leaders based on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Website information &amp; resources</td>
<td>• Negotiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development and maintenance of effective relationships with school leaders</td>
<td>• Influence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Appropriate challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Non-dependent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision of Framework Agreement contract template for consultants e.g. EAL</td>
<td>Knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues</td>
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<td>Support to schools/clusters to commission in partnership with the LA where systemic issues are identified or at particular crisis points</td>
<td>Ability to review and analyse what is happening in a school/cluster in order to identify priorities and actions</td>
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<td>Knowledge and understanding of commissioning requirements and practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitation of meetings to provide guidance and support to school-based staff undertaking absence and behaviour work with vulnerable cyp</td>
<td>Ability to facilitate others to take on ‘new’ responsibilities and share good practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statutory functions as necessary and as last resort</td>
<td>Knowledge of legislation and ability to discharge duties appropriately</td>
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