

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION STANDARDS AND
INCLUSION****A STRATEGY FOR CLOSING THE EDUCATIONAL GAPS IN
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To present a summary of the impact of Nottinghamshire's Closing the Educational Gaps (CtG) Strategy 2012-2014.

Information and Advice**Context**

2. The CtG Strategy was approved by Full Council on 29 March 2012. It sets out Nottinghamshire County Council's long term commitment to ensuring that the full range of services and partners work coherently with schools and other educational settings to maximise the impact of available resources in further improving the attainment and progress of vulnerable groups of learners.

Key actions and impact to date:

3. The key actions identified in the CtG Strategy continue to provide the focus of our collaborative working between all partners named within the Strategy.
4. The **CtG Performance Board** meets termly to review the Strategy and to hold each service/team to account for the impact of CtG activities. Membership includes Group/Team Managers from across Children, Families and Cultural Services (CFCS). Public Health is also now represented on the Board. A primary head teacher from the "Together for Newark" Steering Group also sits on the Board and provides advice and feedback about locality working to close gaps. The Strategy has been included within Nottinghamshire's revised Early Help Strategy. CtG pledges have also been revised within Nottinghamshire's refreshed Child Poverty Strategy.
5. Nottinghamshire's **Data and Performance Team (DPT)** provides the CtG Board with a wide range of CtG datasets in order to assess impact, identify areas of greatest need, areas for improvement and examples of good practice that can be shared and built upon.

6. **Early analysis of the 2014 provisional attainment data** for pupils who were eligible for free school meals at some point in the past 6 years (**FSM6**) shows that continued improvements have been made in terms of narrowing gaps at key thresholds as follows:
 - at Key Stage 2, Nottinghamshire schools have narrowed the gap between FSM6 and Non FSM6 from 19.9% in 2013 to 16.5% in 2014 – representing a narrowing of 3.4%;
 - at Key Stage 4 (based on all entries), there has been a similar rate of improvement over the past year. The gap narrowed from 31.5% in 2013 to 27.4% in 2014 – representing a narrowing of 4.1%.
7. A more detailed analysis of Nottinghamshire's validated FSM6 outcomes, including trends analysis and national comparisons, will be available in the spring term of 2015.
8. Good progress has been made on key actions taken by the **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy and Provision** teams. An agreed strategy to improve provision and outcomes for children and young people with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) has been largely delivered. There has been a 30% reduction in exclusions over the last two years. School capacity to provide appropriate support for pupils with SEBD has been significantly enhanced through local partnership working, peer support and challenge coupled with programmes of professional development. The Education, Health and Care pathfinder has successfully developed a pathway to ensure key partners work with families and their children or young people with special educational, health and/or care needs to agree effective and efficient ways to support these vulnerable learners to achieve their full potential.
9. **Latest analysis of the 2014 attainment data for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)** shows that year on year improvements have been made in terms of narrowing gaps as follows:
 - at Key Stage 2, Nottinghamshire schools have narrowed the gap between SEN and Non SEN pupils from 57.2% in 2013 to 53.9% in 2014 – representing a narrowing of 3.3%;
 - at Key Stage 4, there has been a similar rate of improvement over the last year. The gap narrowed from 47.2% in 2013 to 43% in 2014 – representing a narrowing of 4.2%.
10. Nottinghamshire's **Admissions Team** continues to work closely with schools to ensure that the Fair Access Protocol is used effectively and consistently so that all learners without a school place are rapidly offered an appropriate placement to maximize their time spent in learning. The average waiting time for a school place was reduced from 94 days in the autumn term 2012 to 25 days in the similar period in 2013. In addition, the longest waiting period for a school place for an individual pupil has reduced from 467 days in 2011-12 to 178 days in 2012-13.
11. **Targeted Support and Youth Justice (TSYJ)** teams continue to work with vulnerable students who meet the thresholds for Early Help, Supporting Families or Youth Justice and for whom attendance is an issue. The rate of persistent absence for 2012-13 was 4.8% compared to 4.9% for 2011-12. Overall absence rates increased from 5.0% to 5.4%

with an increase in absences authorised by schools. The TSYJ teams also support 16-18 year olds who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET). Current data shows that Nottinghamshire continues to have low levels of NEET. The three month average figure for NEET (November 2013 to January 2014) was 2.8% compared to an England average of 4.7%. Participation (In Learning) was 90.6% compared to an England average of 83.2%. The percentage of young people 'Not Known' was 5.5% compared to an England average of 8.0%.

12. On 1 April 2014, **The Early Help Unit** was aligned with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to provide improved access to early help through a single point of access to all support services for vulnerable children, young people and their families. During October 2013 to March 2014, 945 early help assessments were completed. Early help services fully resolved 55% of referrals between January and March 2014 and partially resolved a further 12%. 13% of referrals were not resolved. A further 8% were not progressed due to consent being withdrawn. 3% have been referred to Children's Social Care. 4% have been referred to another service. 1% have moved out of the area and a further 4% had not been recorded at the time of this data collation.
13. **The Early Years and Early Intervention team** makes a strong and significant contribution to the CtG Strategy. 79% of all children living in low income areas are currently registered with one of Nottinghamshire's 58 children's centres and just over half of these have accessed children's centre services. Over the next two years, free early education places will be targeted to 40% of all two year olds in England (3,700 children in Nottinghamshire). The Government expects all two year olds to have access to a place in a setting that has been rated at least 'Good' by Ofsted. Of those providers inspected in Nottinghamshire, 76% have been rated as being either Good or Outstanding.
14. The **Education Improvement Service (EIS)** has successfully delivered a wide range of conferences, sold offer networks and head teacher briefings and services to ensure school leaders and governors have access to national and international speakers, latest research and innovative practice to close educational gaps. Close collaboration between the EIS and the **Governing Body Service** has increased the range of opportunities for advice, support and training for Nottinghamshire governors to fulfil their enhanced role in terms of monitoring the use of Pupil Premium funding to close gaps. The EIS continues to effectively promote, commission and model a wide range of collaborative activities between and across CFCS services.
15. **The 'Together for Newark' (TfN) pilot** was initially formed as a two year 'Closing the Gaps' strategy in the autumn of 2012 to look at improving locality-based working between partners in one geographical area of Nottinghamshire. The aim was to support children and young people from pre-school into further and higher education so that they are able to achieve their full potential. The pilot is underpinned by three principles:
 - what works best rather than just what works
 - releasing capacity
 - collective decisions based on analysis not assumption.
16. The **Newark Town Steering Group** represents partners from a wide range of services and educational settings in the town, including the Newark and Sherwood District Council. This group has developed a clear, strategic plan based on a range of CtG

activities and has established a structure and process for local governance, decision-making and shared accountability for closing educational gaps within the town.

17. Interim evaluations of the TfN pilot have been carried out separately by researchers from **Nottingham Trent University and from Manchester University** to further inform local and LA planning for closing the gaps. Early findings from research activities indicate that:

“...locality working in Newark Town has already made a positive impact on education provision and wider learning opportunities in Newark. Within a year, focused activities have led Newark’s schools and services to start to collectively address barriers, concerns and issues identified by local families and professionals.” Professor Gill Richards, Nottingham Trent University.

“TfN has established a strong steering group which: (i) brings together schools and wider partners – namely local authority and district council officers; (ii) draws on a wide range of intelligence about the situation in Newark and professional knowledge; and (iii) has created a framework for stimulating and monitoring the development of new working groups and activities.... TfN has generated a considerable range of activity which has been inclusive of a wide range of partners and responded to a wide range of concerns. Those involved have reported positive impacts for children and families, and for professional practices and relationships.” Professor Alan Dyson and Dr Kirsten Kerr, Centre for Equity in Education at Manchester University.

2014 provisional outcomes for Newark and Sherwood District at Key Stage 2 compared to other districts and Nottinghamshire overall

- *the combined outcomes for the FSM6 pupils in Newark and Sherwood District are much improved over the 2 years of the Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy and are noticeably greater than all other districts and Nottinghamshire as a whole. For instance, Newark and Sherwood primary schools’ attainment for FSM6 pupils on this measure improved by 11.7% between 2012 and 2014 whereas the Nottinghamshire improvement stands at 6.3%.*
 - *the performance across Nottinghamshire on this indicator has improved by 4.4% between 2013-14 compared with a rise of 1.9% in the previous year indicating an impact of the universal Closing the Gap Strategy across Nottinghamshire.*
 - *provisional data for 2014 indicates that the FSM6/Non FSM6 gap for the Newark and Sherwood District has narrowed between 2012 and 2014 by 10.5 percentage points compared to a Nottinghamshire gap reduction of 5.8%. This reduction is also significantly greater than in all other districts.*
18. Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) sees this way of working in local areas as the future for the greater involvement of local communities in influencing and determining the direction of improvement in education in their area, particularly at a time when difficult funding decisions are being made. Following robust external evaluations by our external research partners, NCC is currently in consultation with the educational settings and wider partners within the **Worksop district** in order to extend and build upon this model of partnership and collaborative working.

19. A further report which will seek Members' approval for an update of the Strategy to run from 2015/16 will be brought to the Committee early in the New Year. This report will also update Members with validated, individually pupil tracked data to provide greater precision to the process of evaluation of effectiveness.

Other Options Considered

20. No other options were considered.

Reason for Recommendations

21. Latest impact data and external research evaluation indicates that the CtG Strategy is having a positive impact on narrowing the gaps for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged learners. There is growing evidence that cross service/phase collaborative working at County and locality level is beginning to develop new ways of working focused on earlier intervention to close gaps and ensure vulnerable learners meet their potential.

Statutory and Policy Implications

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the impact of the Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy 2012-14 be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

23. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 28/10/14)

24. There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

A Strategy for Closing the Nottinghamshire Educational Gaps 2012-14

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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