

**11 February 2019****Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND  
SKILLS****STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL  
(2019-2021)****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to develop and consult on a Strategy for Improving Educational Opportunities for All and bring back the consultation outcomes and a proposed Strategy to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Information**

2. The Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy (2012) was approved by Members at Full Council on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and the Strategy was refreshed in Autumn 2014. The Closing the Gap Strategy has successfully brought together Nottinghamshire County Council services and key partners to work coherently with schools and other educational settings to maximise the impact of available resources in further raising the attainment and increasing the progress of the most vulnerable group of learners.
3. In Nottinghamshire, since the introduction of the Strategy in 2012, outcomes for children and young people entitled to free school meals at any point in the last 6 years (FSM6) have improved. The Strategy has also led to improvements for Non-FSM6 children and young people across all key stages. Actions taken by educational settings to secure these improvements are now embedded in day to day provision with a particular focus on literacy and narrowing educational attainment gaps. Improvement in attainment and progress for White British FSM6 children and young people remains a priority.
4. The Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy now needs refreshing to reflect new national priorities, which recognise the central role that education plays in breaking down the barriers to social mobility that face too many young people. Disadvantaged children and young people are less likely to achieve their academic potential, secure employment and gain a sense of future financial security.
5. The "*State of the Nation*" report from the Social Mobility Commission (November 2017) ranked all English local authorities into hotspots and coldspots for every life stage from the early years through to working lives. The East Midlands was the worst performing area in

terms of social mobility in the country. In terms of Nottinghamshire, 6 of the 7 districts were ranked as coldspots (worst social mobility outcomes), where Ashfield, Newark and Sherwood and Mansfield were ranked in the lowest 10 of the 324 local authority areas assessed.

6. The Department for Education's '*Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential*' (December 2017) sets out the government's national plan to improve social mobility through education. The report sets out four key life-stage ambitions:

- close the word gap in the early years
- close the attainment gap in school while continuing to raise standards for all
- provide high-quality post 16 choices for all young people
- ensure everyone achieves their full potential in rewarding careers.

7. It is intended that the new Strategy will deliver key ambitions in the Nottinghamshire County Council Plan 2017-2021, 'Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future', as follows:

*"A great place to bring up your family"* acknowledges the importance of giving children the best possible start in life and the opportunity to attend good schools. It is proposed that the new strategy will have an enhanced focus on the "readiness to learn" agenda, striving to ensure the development of emotional health and wellbeing, independence, self-esteem and the desire to learn.

*"A great place to fulfil your ambition"* aims to increase the number of young people who leave education with better qualifications and skills, thus able to find higher paid, more skilled jobs. The new Strategy will have a particular focus on maximising partnership working across the secondary and Post 16 sectors to improve pathways into adulthood and employment.

*"A great place to start and grow your business"* acknowledges the need for a skilled workforce. It identifies the importance that the skills taught in our schools and colleges match the needs of local businesses and so support the ambitions of our young people. The Strategy will develop active partnership links with Council services and key partners, especially learning providers and employers.

8. Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future recognises that everyone deserves a chance to go as far as their hard work and talent can take them. It is proposed that the new 'Strategy for Improving Educational Opportunities for All' will act as a driver for this plan and its vision where 'all children have the same opportunities and life chances.'
9. The new Strategy will continue to focus on all vulnerable groups, particularly those children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as well as those eligible for free school meals (FSM), looked after children (LAC) and those ethnic minority groups whose attainment and progress is below expectation.

### **Other Options Considered**

10. A policy is required and the options are being considered through the period of consultation. Groups to be consulted include learning providers (early years settings, primary, secondary, special schools, further education colleges and universities), employers and local authority

teams and partners. There would be no cost to this consultation as work relies on core funding streams from across partners. The period of consultation will be from January to May 2019.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

11. Post 16 outcomes remain below national for all young people on academic and vocational pathways. Too many young people with SEND are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and the new Strategy will seek to work with partners to improve pathway planning and so address this underperformance. The aim is to ensure that all children and young people access high quality educational provision and so achieve their academic potential, secure employment and gain a sense of future financial security.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

13. There would be no cost to the consultation as electronic communication and existing meetings with partners will be used.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the Committee approves the development and consultation on a Strategy for Improving Educational Opportunities for All and that a report on the consultation outcomes and a proposed Strategy be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Marion Clay**  
**Service Director, Education, Learning and Skills**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Koni Rakhit  
Temporary Education Improvement Adviser, Closing the Gap  
T: 07921942443  
E: [koni.rakhit@nottsgov.uk](mailto:koni.rakhit@nottsgov.uk)

### **Constitutional Comments (SLB 18/01/19)**

14. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

## **Financial Comments (SAS 23/01/19)**

15. There are no financial implications arising directly from this 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.

State of the Nation - Social Mobility Commission report (November 2017)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/662744/State\\_of\\_the\\_Nation\\_2017\\_-\\_Social\\_Mobility\\_in\\_Great\\_Britain.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf)

Unlocking Talent Fulfilling Potential - Department for Education (December 2017)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/667690/Social\\_Mobility\\_Action\\_Plan\\_-\\_for\\_printing.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan_-_for_printing.pdf)

Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy 2012

<http://home.nottscc.gov.uk/working/policies-performance/policy/policy-library/closing-the-educational-gaps>

Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy 2014 (refreshed)

Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future

<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/plans-policies-and-assessments/council-plans-and-policies/strategic-plan-2017-2021>

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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