

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

**A STRATEGY FOR CLOSING THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EDUCATIONAL  
GAPS**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for the adoption of a Nottinghamshire County Council Strategy to close the educational attainment gaps for vulnerable groups (see **Appendix 1**).

**Information and Advice**

**Context**

2. This strategy is designed to align on-going work across the County Council to support the closing of the educational attainment gap for vulnerable groups, particularly those children and young people eligible for free school meals (FSM), those who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Looked After Children (LAC).

**Key drivers for change**

3. The Child Poverty Act 2010 places emphasis on the significant difference that can be made through partnership working.
4. The 2010 White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' recognises the part county councils can play in delivering their role as champion of children and families.
5. The new Ofsted framework (January 2012) maintains a sharp focus on vulnerable groups. When conducting inspections of maintained schools and academies, inspectors will evaluate how well gaps are narrowing between the performance of different groups of pupils in the school and compared with all pupils nationally.

**How the Local Authority (LA) is responding to the challenge**

9. LA actions include:
  - making a moral commitment to break the link between poverty and low educational attainment
  - re-structuring Nottinghamshire County Council services to meet the challenges of Child Poverty in Nottinghamshire

- re-structuring the Education Improvement Service to ensure that the 'Closing the Educational Gaps' agenda is a strategic responsibility underpinning the work of all team members
- building upon the success of the Achievement for All (AfA) pilot project conducted during 2009-11. This project focussed upon increasing the progress of children with SEND through developing teaching and learning, improving the engagement of parents and carers with the school and increasing the participation, enjoyment and achievement of children with SEND in all elements of school life
- re-structuring the Targeted Support and Youth Justice Service to bring together a range of services for vulnerable young people aged 8-18. This service will be the lead for maintaining the low levels of students not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Nottinghamshire. It will support vulnerable young people to continue in education or training to the age of 17 as will be required in 2013 when new national regulations come into place for the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA)
- re-structuring the Early Years' Service leading to an extended, integrated Family Support Offer for families with children 0-12
- targeting early years settings and schools with specific, evidence-based language development interventions
- forming a steering group to develop a shared strategy focused on Closing the Educational Gaps for vulnerable groups made up of LA officers from the key services working most closely with children, young people and their families and schools. These are identified with an asterisk in paragraph 10 below
- working collaboratively with Nottingham Trent University to provide advice and guidance on research methodologies and effective evaluation
- piloting a closing the educational gaps project in Newark Town involving two families of schools serving an area with high levels of social disadvantage. A key factor of this pilot will be to incorporate a national campaign led by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to encourage closer working and co-design of service provision between local people, a range of County Council services and other partners. This project will build upon the views of vulnerable children, young people, parents/carers
- producing an implementation plan to inform partnership work initially in Newark Town with a view to evaluating impact, sharing successful features with key stakeholders and extending this integrated approach to other targeted localities in Nottinghamshire **(see Appendix 2)**.

10. Key services and partners will include:

- Children's Centres, Primary and Secondary Schools and Colleges of Further Education
- Early Years and Early Intervention Services\*
- Education Improvement Services\*
- SEND Policy and Provision\*
- Achievement and Equality Services\*

- Young People's Service
- Targeted Support and Youth Justice Service\*
- Children's Social Care
- Admissions\*
- Performance and Review\*
- Governor Services
- Nottingham Trent University

### Other Options Considered

11. Alternative styles and scope for the Strategy have been considered. However, a high level strategy focussing on the work of the County Council in partnership with schools, key services and partners is the preferred option.

### Reasons for recommendations

12. International research (*McKinsey & Company*)<sup>1</sup> shows that:
- “the challenge of achieving high and socially equitable distribution of learning outcomes can be successfully addressed and that excellence can be achieved consistently throughout the education systems, with very few students and schools left behind” (Foreword)
  - “the very best school systems (in the world) intervene at the level of the individual student, developing processes and structures within schools that are able to identify whenever a student is starting to fall behind, and then intervening to improve that child's performance” (page 37).
13. The above research extracts are especially relevant to improving the educational provision for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Ensuring quality classroom experiences for FSM students and improving the quality of dialogue between home and school is crucial if we are to increase the attainment of these vulnerable learners.
14. The shift within the County Council from providing educational services directly to schools to commissioning and brokering support requires informed knowledge of ‘what works well’ and rigorous accountability for the effective use of resources which are increasingly devolved directly to schools. It also requires shared moral purpose and commitment from all partners.
15. This Strategy will better align the work of key services and allow us to make a stronger contribution to Nottinghamshire's Child Poverty Strategy and most specifically to:
- use a **whole family approach**
  - use a **targeted approach** to work with children, families and communities in greatest need
  - use **early intervention approaches** to break cycle of disadvantage
  - **integrate service provision** to enable easier access and enable holistic support packages for those who need them most

---

<sup>1</sup> *McKinsey & Company – ‘How the world's best performing school systems keep coming out on top’ – September 2007*

- **increase educational attainment**, skills and employment amongst young people and parents across Nottinghamshire

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service 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**

17. The delivery of the Strategy is primarily based on current revenue budgets available to schools particularly through the Pupil Premium.
18. To ensure the success and effective evaluation of the initial pilot project in Newark Town, it is recognised that this will require close project management and access to external evaluation. As a result, the Education Improvement Service will allocate funding totalling £72,750 for project management, initial start-up costs and external evaluation in 2012/13 from within its existing budget allocation.

## **Equalities Implications**

19. As part of the process of making decisions and changing policy, public authorities are required by law to think about the need to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics (as defined by equalities legislation) and those who do not
  - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
20. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are a means by which a public authority can assess the potential impact that proposed decisions / changes to policy could have on the community and those with protected characteristics. They may also identify potential ways to reduce any impact that a decision / policy change could have. If it is not possible to reduce the impact, the EIA can explain why. Decision makers must understand the potential implications of their decisions on people with protected characteristics.
21. An EIA has been undertaken and is available as a background paper. Decision makers must give due regard to the implications for protected groups when considering this report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That:

- 1) the County Council approves the Strategy to Close the Educational Attainment Gaps for vulnerable groups and its associated implementation plan.
- 2) an update report be presented to the Children and Young People's Committee by the end of September 2012.

**Councillor Philip Owen**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services**

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

Janeen Parker  
Education Improvement Adviser  
T: 01623 434148

**Constitutional Comments (LM 29/02/12)**

22. The recommendations in the report fall within the constitutional delegation to the full Council Meeting.

**Financial Comments (NDR 29/02/12)**

23. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 17 and 18 of the report.

**Background Papers**

"Building Aspiration: Working Together to Tackle Child and Family Poverty in Nottinghamshire"  
[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/es/8.item5-childpovertystrategy060911.pdf](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/es/8.item5-childpovertystrategy060911.pdf)

Nottinghamshire Children, Young People and Families Plan 2011-14  
<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/cypfplanv101oct11.pdf>

Children, Families and Cultural Services Business Plan 2011-14  
[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/children\\_familiesandculturalservicesbp4876](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/children_familiesandculturalservicesbp4876)

Nottinghamshire's 16-19 Participation and Attainment Plan 2011-12  
[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/.../childrenyoungpeopleandfamiliesplan/raiseachievement16to19.htm](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/.../childrenyoungpeopleandfamiliesplan/raiseachievement16to19.htm)

Nottinghamshire's Language for Life Strategy  
[www.literacytrust.org.uk/.../2029nottinghamshire'slanguageforlifestrategy](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/.../2029nottinghamshire'slanguageforlifestrategy)

Early Years and Early Intervention Strategy  
[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nottinghamshiresearlyinterventionandpreventionstrategy\\_final\\_21.06.2011](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nottinghamshiresearlyinterventionandpreventionstrategy_final_21.06.2011)

*'How the world's best performing school systems keep coming out on top'* – McKinsey & Company – September 2007  
<http://mckinseysociety.com/how-the-worlds-best-performing-schools-come-out-on-top/>

Closing the Educational Gaps Equality Impact Assessment

Nottinghamshire's FSM/Non-FSM attainment and 'gap' data for 2007 – 2011

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.

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

All.

M19C2968