



**30 March 2017**

**Agenda Item: 3**

**Children's Trust Executive Sponsor: Marion Clay**

## **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.

### **Information and Advice**

#### **Context**

2. The CtG Strategy was approved by Full Council on 29 March 2012 and updated in autumn 2014 for the 2014-16 period. 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 and/or disadvantaged groups of learners. **A key focus of the refreshed strategy is** to "work with schools, key services and partners to support a whole system approach to planning and commissioning in order to raise aspirations, build school readiness and academic resilience, promote health and economic well-being and ensure accelerated progress and good attainment for the most vulnerable learners."
3. For the purposes of this report, '**disadvantaged pupils**' refers to those pupils who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the past 6 years (FSM6) and are therefore eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

#### **Key actions and update on impact since the last report**

4. The key actions identified in the CtG Strategy, led by the **Education Improvement Service** and monitored termly by the **CtG Performance Board** continue to provide the focus of the collaborative working between all partners named within the Strategy.
5. Nottinghamshire's **Performance, Intelligence and Policy Team (PIP)** continues to produce a wide range of high quality 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 at county, local and school level. The team continues to generate and interrogate CtG datasets at district, locality and ward level with a sharper focus over the last two years on close analysis of 'multiple risk' factors for key vulnerable groups, e.g. White British FSM Boys.
6. This commentary is based on provisional outcomes for Nottinghamshire's disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in 2016. The national outcomes for these groups are yet to be published. There have been a number of **significant changes** to key performance measures over recent years including the introduction of new Key Stage 4 performance

measures and the removal of National Curriculum levels for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. **Hence, comparisons cannot be made with 2015 gaps for Key Stages 1, 2 and 4.**

- In **Early Years**, provisional outcomes in 2016 indicate that the FSM gap for pupils eligible for free school meals attaining a good level of development and those not eligible has narrowed. Nottinghamshire's gap now stands at 22.6 percentage points which is a 5 percentage point fall from the 27.6 reported in 2015. This also brings the Local Authority (LA) gap in 2016 closer to the 2015 national gap (18 percentage points).
- At **Key Stage 2**, provisional data for 2016 indicates a gap of 24 percentage points between the percentage of FSM6 pupils and Non FSM6 pupils achieving the expected standard or above in combined reading, writing and mathematics. Figures show that 35.7% of FSM6 gained this measure compared to 59.7% of Non FSM6 pupils.
- In terms of Nottinghamshire's Key Stage 2 outcomes for **White British FSM Boys** and White British Non FSM boys, the 2016 gap stands at 29 percentage points. 24.3% of White British FSM boys gained the expected standard in combined reading, writing and mathematics compared to 53.9% of White British Non FSM boys. This is an area for focused, collaborative action in 2016 -17.

7. At **Key Stage 4**, the current information is considered provisional and subject to change. The previous headline indicator of 5+ A\*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics has now been removed. The closest comparator currently available is based on the percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in both GCSE English and mathematics although this measure is now based on the best grade achieved in English Language or Literature when previously only the Language was counted. Based on these caveats, the following CtG commentary is offered:

- 42.2% of FSM6 pupils achieved **A\*-C grades in both GCSE English and mathematics** in 2016 which represents a 5.1 percentage points improvement on 2015. 72.6% of Non FSM6 pupils achieved this combined measure which represents a 6.1 percentage points improvement on 2015. The LA's FSM6 gap therefore widened from 29.4 percentage points in 2015 to 30.4 percentage points in 2016.
- In terms of Nottinghamshire's **KS4 outcomes for White British FSM Boys** and White British Non FSM boys, 26.8% of White British FSM boys achieved A\*-C grades in both GCSE English and mathematics which represents an improvement of 2.1 percentage points compared to 64.2% of White British Non FSM boys, which is also an improvement of 6.9 percentage points. Although outcomes for both groups have improved, the LA gap has widened to 37.4 percentage points from the 32.6 percentage points gap reported in 2015.

8. An initial analysis of **district level** data provides the following headline commentary. Provisional data charts are attached as **Appendix 1**.

- At **Early Years**, most districts have witnessed a fall in the FSM/Non FSM gap, some with quite sharp falls. Rushcliffe and Broxtowe have seen sharp increases in their FSM attainment levels which has had a dramatic impact on gap narrowing in these areas. Gedling district was the only area to witness an increase in the gap due to a fall in the attainment for FSM pupils of 12.7 percentage points between 2015 and 2016. As a result, Gedling district now has the widest gap whereas in 2015 it had the narrowest gap. This is under further investigation at a locality level.
- At **Key Stage 2**, the FSM6/Non FSM6 gap was widest in the Rushcliffe district (28 percentage points) although outcomes for FSM6 pupils in this district were the highest

amongst all districts at 42.15. Bassetlaw district witnessed the narrowest gap in 2016 (20.1 percentage points).

- **Key Stage 4** district level data for 2016 is not yet available.
9. The **Support to Schools Service (StSS)** has now been restructured to incorporate an extended group of teams focusing on advocacy for all children, young people and their families, with many teams championing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. As a result, the collaborative work of these teams is now more closely aligned to closing Nottinghamshire's attainment gaps. The StSS comprises Governing Body Services, Education Improvement Service including The Virtual School for Looked After Children (VS), Achievement and Equality (A&E), Reading Recovery, (RR), Teaching and Learning/Newly Qualified Teaching workforce (T&L/NQTs), Fair Access including the Primary, Social, Emotional Development Team, Schools and Families Specialist Services (SFSS), Admissions, Place Planning, Elective Home Education, Tackling Emerging Threats to Children and the Educational Psychology Service (EPS).
10. The work of StSS is summarised in **four key strands** of collaborative work to close gaps:
- ensuring children and young people have a good education when in school
  - getting children and young people ready for school (readiness for learning and building resilience)
  - supporting children and young people who are at risk of being excluded from school
  - helping children and young people who do not feel included or who are at risk of going missing from school
11. The key vulnerable pupil groups which StSS teams will focus upon collaboratively this coming year to address their needs and multiple risk factors include:
- young children with special educational needs (*A&E, SFSS, Notts Speech and Language team*)
  - children and young people who are displaced and/or experiencing trauma and attachment issues (*EPS, VS and A&E*)
  - pupils with communication and/or social, emotional, mental health needs (*Fair Access, EPS, A&E*)
  - pupils with language and/or literacy needs (*A&E, RR, T&L/NQTs*)
12. The impact of StSS's collaborative work will be reported in the next 6 monthly CtG report to Committee.
13. The **Education Improvement Service** continues to ensure that key actions are in place to provide challenge and support for Nottinghamshire's schools and academies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. These include:
- the delivery of primary and secondary head teacher briefings and Closing the Gap conferences with an enhanced focus on the '**East Midlands Challenge**' which sets out the urgent agenda to improve outcomes for key disadvantaged learners: FSM6; White British FSM6; Looked After Children; and those with English as an Additional Language (EAL);
  - **Education Improvement Adviser** support for targeted schools, focusing particularly on the provision and outcomes for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups, including bespoke visits to targeted schools/academies where **Looked After Children** outcomes are of concern;

- bespoke Pupil Premium Reviews for targeted schools as well as the development of a **'Pupil Premium Toolkit'** and training offer to build schools' and Systems Leaders' capacity for self-evaluation and improvement planning in order to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. *(Currently approximately 190 delegates from 120 Nottinghamshire schools have accessed this training since February 2016).*
- working with the **Teaching School Alliances (TSAs)** to develop and promote a **cohesive 'sold offer'** which will enable Nottinghamshire's schools to access appropriate training and support in a timely manner.

14. **The Early Childhood and Early Help (Locality) service** continues to contribute to supporting the improvement of early years' attainment, the impact of which is shown by 67% of children achieving a good level of development compared to 65% last year and a narrowing of the FSM/Non FSM attainment gap by 5 percentage points from 2015 to 2016. 89% of early education providers in Nottinghamshire are currently rated 'Good' or better by Ofsted and 72% of eligible two year olds now take up their free entitlement to childcare. Children's Centres have registered all children and families and have seen 77% of them, the highest proportion so far. A revised Early Years Improvement Plan is being prepared to reflect findings from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data to ensure appropriate measures are in place to ensure continuous improvement in early years attainment.
15. The **Children Missing Education Strategy** continues to drive improvements in relation to ensuring that the most vulnerable children and young people in Nottinghamshire are enabled to access an appropriate full time education. The Primary Social Emotional Development Team (PSED), Partnership Officers and Fair Access Team are now working under the leadership of the same Team Manager to ensure a unified and consistent approach to their work. Since September 2016, the Fair Access Partnership has received 50 complex referrals in relation to children and young people who need support to access a school place. The Partnership Team and the PSED Team have been working hard to support schools in developing alternative pathways for children and young people who would otherwise be at risk of permanent exclusion. The funding that was previously used to make provision for permanently excluded pupils at the three Learning Centres has now been devolved to Primary and Secondary School partnerships across the County to support them in this endeavour. In the academic year 2015-2016, eight out of the 17 secondary partnerships achieved a zero exclusion figure. There is a clear pathway followed by all education teams in the LA if they identify cases of children and young people who are either without a school place or without access to an appropriate education. The LA currently has 61 pupils accessing Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) as a result of this multi-agency approach. These learners would otherwise be Children Missing Education. The Partnership Development Officers are working with the Fair Access Team, the Looked After Children's Team and the Integrated Children's Disability Service to ensure that the LA has a consistent approach to championing positive academic outcomes for pupils educated through EOTAS.
16. **Nottinghamshire's Family Service** works with vulnerable families who meet the Level 3 or 4 thresholds in Nottinghamshire's Pathway to Provision. The service is funded in part through the Troubled Families Programme with two of the criteria including young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and those with poor attendance. According to the recently-published NEET Scorecard, NEET rates in Nottinghamshire remain low with the County's combined NEET and Not Known rate being in line with the England average. Over 95% of Year 11 leavers in 2016 received an offer of a place in learning. Similarly, pupil absence rates are below or in line with national England averages (Overall and Persistent).

17. Nottinghamshire's Education Improvement Service, Early Childhood and Early Help Service, English as Additional Language Consultants and the Nottinghamshire's Healthcare **Speech and Language Team** (NHC SLT) continue to work closely to ensure schools and educational settings maintain a high profile on developing the speech, communication and language skills of all pupils. Linking with the Specialist Leaders in Education national programme, the NHC SLT continues to support **Language Lead accreditation and networks**. There are currently 88 accredited Language Leads across the County with another 18 working towards accreditation. Following the successful pilot of the '**Talking to Learn**' (T2L) workforce development project in Gedling (2014-15), an increased number of primary schools are now using Pupil Premium funding to purchase additional speech and language therapists' support to build their capacity to target disadvantaged pupils who do not meet the thresholds for a health referral but still require additional support to develop their language skills. A recent evaluation report published by NHC SLT indicated that for those schools taking part in the T2L programme, 92% of the targeted disadvantaged pupils had age-appropriate language skills at the end of the programme compared to only 42% of targeted disadvantaged pupils at the beginning of T2L.
18. The **Together for Newark (TfN)** cross-phase locality collaboration which began in the summer of 2012 is now well established with new working groups formed for 2016-17. The TfN Steering Group has been reconstituted, with representation from primary schools, both secondary schools, the local special school, business representatives and other local area stakeholders. A re-branded website is now in place which aims to reach more stakeholders to further improve communication and collaboration. The website contains different areas entitled Together for Health, Together for Education and Together for Business. Newark schools and local business partners continue to forge links around their Future Careers work to raise the aspirations and readiness for work and employment of all Newark pupils. This builds on the successful 'Newark Summit' which was brokered and facilitated by the Council during the spring term 2016. TfN partners are keen to develop the resilience of children and young people and the staff who work with them. To this end, a working party has been formed to develop in-school strategies around 'readiness for learning' and social, emotional mental health and well-being in partnership with health professionals. Another working party is identifying opportunities to develop Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) provision in schools. Validated outcomes for the TfN schools will be reported in the next Closing the Gap report.
19. The '**Together for Worksop**' (TfW) locality collaboration is now in its second year of development. The TfW steering group has been extended to include a representative from the local secondary academy and the website has also been redeveloped. Schools have identified head teachers who are taking a lead with TfW partners on five different areas of development:
- Material deprivation
  - Wider Cultural experience
  - Social and emotional skills
  - Opportunity and career aspiration
  - Linguistic Skill Development
20. 'TfW' early years' settings, schools and local partners remain strongly focused on developing innovative transition practices and supporting pupils' (and parents') understanding of 'readiness for learning' at key points of transition. A number of schools also continue to take part in resilience-building projects led by external partners (e.g. "Talking to Learn" led by Nottinghamshire's Speech and Language Service and "Take Five" resilience building programme led by Each Amazing Breath). The 'End of Year 1' external evaluation which was conducted by the Centre for Equity in Education at Manchester University confirmed that "TfW has already established some activities which have the

potential to be strategically important in the town, and to support the improvement of outcomes over time”. Validated outcomes for the TfW will be reported in the next Closing the Gap report.

21. **‘Take Five’** is a universal and tailored, trauma-smart, **resilience-building programme** built upon body-based mindfulness practices and strong evidence. It has been developed and delivered in a number of Worksop schools by Each Amazing Breath (Community Interest Company). The programme facilitates new ways of working between schools and wider partners in a shared locality and aims to build community and workforce resilience. Over the past 12 months, approximately 2,000 children and young people (and their teachers) from across seven schools in Worksop have been involved in ‘Take Five’ and 125 of these pupils are now trained as Take Five Ambassadors/Leaders. An end-of-programme report recently published by Each Amazing Breath suggests that benefits for pupils include increased concentration, calmness and decreased stress levels. After a recent successful funding bid to **Health Education England (HEE)**, Each Amazing Breath and Nottinghamshire County Council are now taking part in a **year-long national innovation pilot** to deliver practical resilience building as part of a highly integrated and visionary national strategy as part of ‘Future in Mind’. HEE has funded the delivery of Take Five for 12 more schools in the Bassetlaw District and Newark and Sherwood District. In addition, Bassetlaw Clinical Commissioning Group has funded four schools in the Retford area to also take part.
22. In the Mansfield district, a steering group of primary head teachers has been working collaboratively on behalf of **“Together for Mansfield”** to develop collaborative research and action around the impact of loss and bereavement on disadvantaged learners. Outcomes of this pilot will be shared with schools and wider partners in 2017.
23. In the **Broxtowe** district, a group of schools is working closely with Nottinghamshire’s Achievement and Equality Team to develop and share strategies for supporting the needs of pupils with English as an Additional Language needs (EAL). Outcomes of this pilot will be shared with schools and wider partners in 2017.
24. Based on learning shared from Together for Newark and Together for Worksop, a further locality collaboration entitled The **Sherwood Forest Education Partnership (SFEP)** has now been established and is being led by a steering group of key school leaders and wider partners in the Ollerton and Sherwood area of Nottinghamshire.

Reason for recommendation:

25. Latest impact data and partner evaluation indicates that the CtG Strategy continues to have a positive impact on narrowing the gaps for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged learners. There is secure evidence that cross phase/service collaborative working at County and locality level is supporting the development of new ways of working focused on earlier interventions to maximise resources and commitment to ensure vulnerable learners are ready for learning and meet their potential.

## RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the impact of Nottinghamshire’s Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy is noted.

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## **Background Papers**

None