



Executive
9 December 2013

**Report from the
Director of Children and Families**

Wards Affected: ALL

Amalgamation of the Pupil Referral Units

1.0 Summary

- 1.1. Following the recent restructure of the Council's alternative education, behaviour and attendance services in the Children and Families Department, the Executive is now asked to approve formally the amalgamation of the Council's Key Stage 3 (Stag Lane) and Key Stage 4 (Poplar Grove) Pupil Referral Units as part of the restructure.

2.0 Recommendations

That the Executive:

- 2.1 agree to the formal amalgamation of the Council's Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) as part of the restructuring of the borough's alternative education provision.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 Over the last six months, the Children and Families Department has carried out a fundamental review of its alternative education, behaviour and attendance services as part of the One Council Programme. The review has sought to reshape the services to meet a complex range of policy, financial and operational challenges, including changes to the funding framework for alternative education, new service and demographic trends, and a need to develop a service model more closely focussed on prevention and support to Children in mainstream settings.

3.2 The structure for the new Inclusion and Alternative Education Service is designed to achieve:

- A more cost efficient and focused model of service delivery thereby reducing the planned place costs of Pupil Referral Units and freeing up resources to invest in preventative and exclusion services.
- A greater focus on preventative work in primary schools and transition work between primary and secondary schools, with access to a wider range of support to address behavioural, social and mental health issues.
- An extended remit for the Pupil Referral Unit which includes a strong core offer of commissioned services, dual registration, pre-exclusion/behavioural support, and multi-agency work.
- Further reductions in the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions.
- Strong links between the newly amalgamated Inclusion and Alternative Education Service, the Special Educational Needs/Disability Service and Early Help Family Support Service through either hub and spoke arrangements or co-location of staff/services.
- Much closer partnership working on behaviour and attendance between schools, supported by the development of a clear Behaviour and Attendance Strategy.
- Improved specialist assessment and support for particular group of vulnerable pupils and those newly arrived in order to prevent an escalation of difficulties and to avoid high-cost Borough specialist placements.
- A more co-ordinated approach to the commissioning and quality assurance of alternative providers from the private and voluntary sectors on behalf of schools and the Local Authority.
- An increased focus on working with the Corporate Parenting Group to raise the profile of looked after children education issues.

3.3 The vision for the new service is that it should be co-owned with the schools and schools have been involved in shaping the new service as far as possible. Schools' views on current behaviour, attendance and inclusion support have helped to shape final proposals, both through an independent review of behaviour management in twelve Brent secondary schools and six primary schools, and via feedback from the Schools' Forum and other groupings. Proposals for the new structure have actively addressed schools' concerns and were endorsed by the Schools Forum in June 2013. School representation on a newly constituted single PRU Management Committee, which now includes several Brent Head Teachers and Deputy Heads, will ensure that the reshaped service continues to meet schools' current and emerging needs effectively.

Proposals

3.4 The aspect of the new service model which requires Executive approval is the amalgamation of the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 PRUs.

- 3.5 Within the new structure, the Key Stage 3 and 4 PRUs will be amalgamated under a single Head Teacher, with teaching staff expected to work across both settings. There are a number of advantages to an amalgamation. In particular, teaching staff would be expected to work across the different age ranges within the service, potentially smoothing the transition for those pupils who move from the K3 to K4 PRUs, and increasing opportunities for staff professional development. The model will also ensure more effective use of staffing resources, with professional expertise and leadership shared across the service. There will be 36 places at the KS 4 PRU and 20 places at the KS 3 PRU. A key role for the PRU will be to strengthen the vocational offer for pupils and develop a programme of commissioned services /places for schools to buy into at the start of the financial year. There will be 27 permanent posts in the PRU, including leadership, teaching and support roles.
- 3.6 The amalgamation does not require the closure of any buildings. The staffing reductions have already been the subject of extensive discussion and productive work with the teacher and support staff trades unions to ensure a smooth transition (see paragraph 7 below).
- 3.7 In accordance with Department for Education (DFE) guidance, the Council is required to notify the DFE of any PRU amalgamations or closures. Officers are therefore proposing to notify the DFE of the intention to close the KS 4 PRU and amalgamate its provision with the KS 3 Centre from January 2014. This approach will signal that the two PRUs will in future be working as a single unit, rather than expanding or developing new provision (which would trigger a requirement to follow the Academy route). The Stag Lane PRU, which is currently rated 'Good' by OFSTED, will retain its DFE Number, while the Poplar Grove PRU, which was recently rated as 'Requires Improvement', will close. The Executive is asked to agree this proposal.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Following the wider restructure of the alternative education service, the full year net costs of the KS 3 and KS 4 PRUs is now estimated at £1,530,004, compared to a previous net cost of £1,879,005 (based on the 2013/14 budget). This represents a net reduction of £349,001, which largely due to leaner leadership structures and a reduced number of teaching and learning responsibility payments.
- 4.2 The amalgamation of the two PRUs will ensure more effective use of staffing resources, with leadership and teaching staff shared across the two sites. There may also be scope to further reduce the costs of some support services through joint commissioning. Finance will work with the service to assess the scope for any additional reductions in non-staffing budgets in 2014/15, based on the new operating model.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 the Council has a statutory duty to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for children of compulsory school age who by reason of illness exclusion from school or otherwise may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them. The Council is able to meet this duty via the provision available at the KS3 and KS4 PRU's.
- 5.2 The staffing changes at the PRUs that arose through the wider restructuring were managed in accordance with the Council's Managing Change Policy and Procedure and resulted in a number of voluntary redundancies and one compulsory redundancy. The consultation paper issued as part of that process explained the rationale for the changes and made clear that appropriate support would be offered to all staff affected by the proposals. This is helping to manage the potential legal risks associated with any restructuring process effectively.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 A predictive Equality Impact Assessment was completed to support the wider alternative education review process, with input and support from the Council's Equality Team (see consultation paper, September 2013). This indicated that there should not be any negative impact on pupils who may have specific protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act as a result of the changes.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 The staffing restructure reduced the overall staffing level at the KS 3 and KS 4 PRUs from 38 posts (34.3 FTE) to 27 posts (25.95 FTE). Staff in the PRUs, together with their trade union representatives have been involved extensively at all stages of the restructuring exercise and the Council's Managing Change Policy has been fully adhered to.
- 7.2 There will be some minor changes in accommodation arrangements. In particular, we are currently exploring moving the KS 4 PRU to the KS 3 site (Stag Lane) and relocating the KS 3 PRU to Poplar Grove, partly to address safeguarding, security and service delivery concerns. However, management and teaching/teaching support staff at both centres will be expected to work across both locations

Background Papers

Proposals to restructure Alternative Education, Behaviour and Attendance Services, Consultation Document, 9th September 2013 (includes predictive Equality Impact Assessment)

Response to consultation on the Restructure of Alternative Education, Behaviour and Attendance Services and Final Decisions, 21st October 2013.

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