

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 28 June 2016
Report for: Consideration
Report of: Executive Member for Children's Services

Report Title

Executive Response: Closing the Gap: Reducing Educational Inequalities within the Borough of Trafford – Task and Finish Group

Summary

As the Executive Member for Children's Services I welcome the report of the Closing the Gap – Task and Finish Group. I would like to thank the members of the Task & Finish Group for their interest in this particularly important issue. The recommendations are both useful and helpful, and I was pleased to see the involvement of Head Teachers in the process.

I accept the recommendations set out in the report and requested that officers review those recommendations to see how they can inform our practice. I have provided an update below against each of the recommendations.

Recommendations

That the relevant Executive Member responds accordingly to the following recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee:

Recommendation 1 – That the Executive consider using Trafford outreach workers to facilitate one off workshops to provide early years services to parents where an appropriate case could be made.

Whilst agreeing with the idea in principle, as part of our advancing work to reduce the number of children coming into care, work is underway to re-model the Outreach service to work with the most vulnerable families, which might include a focus on early years education, but not exclusively. Where dedicated early years support is required that could be delivered through our 0-11 hubs and their relationship with early years providers and local schools.

Recommendation 2 – That the Executive support the collaborative work of five schools (Stretford High, St Anthony's, Altrincham College, Wellacre & Wellington) in undertaking a project combining their resources and expertise to work towards closing the gap in all schools.

I am pleased to report that this work has been ongoing now for about 6 months and good progress appears to be being made. This work should continue to be supported and I intend to visit some of the schools to discuss the benefits of this work.

Recommendation 3 – That the Executive consider allocating appropriate funding to support the project highlighted in recommendation 2.

Further enquiries need to be made to see if funding can be found.

Recommendation 4 – That the Executive agree that the Council take the lead in organising an event to provide an opportunity for all Trafford schools to come together and share ideas on the four sub topics investigated by the Task and Finish Group.

Whilst agreeing with the objective, the Directorate will be looking at building on any existing structure that might deliver the intended objective, rather than trying to set up an entirely new event that will both require funding and may have capacity issues. The Trafford Primary Teaching School Alliance has already set up an area on their website for primary schools to share good practice. This better suits our current role of signposting and directing, rather than providing direct funding, in other words, trying to get schools to 'take the lead'. The Closing the Gap Secondary Network is open to all secondary schools and could provide the same service for secondary schools.

Recommendation 5 – That the Executive support the development of a depository for schools to share good practice and ideas through an online forum on the InfoTrafford website.

The Executive would be happy to support this recommendation and further discussions will be taking place with those who run the InfoTrafford website.

Recommendation 6 – That the Executive support the organising of a workshop for Head Teachers / senior leaders from both Primary and Secondary schools in Trafford to focus on improving resilience in children.

Work in this area is already happening, as shown by the reference to the work of the Head Teachers of both Seymour Park Primary and Wellfield Infants. I should be pleased to show support by attending the workshop.

Recommendation 7 – That the Executive support the distribution of a letter from Trafford Council which schools can use in conjunction with their own communications outlining the benefits of providing information (particularly National Insurance numbers) to identify children eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

As some parents are reluctant to provide national Insurance details, it is thought that any such letter would require senior level signatures such as Corporate Director and/or Executive Member, to give reassurance that this was a 'bona fide' letter. It is suggested that such a letter would not go directly to individual parents but would be sent out by schools, not by the Council. As the wording is crucial, it is suggested that a Head Teacher (Tony Rae at Seymour Park Primary?) be involved in drafting the wording.

Recommendation 8 – That the Executive supports the Trafford Innovation Hub's work in developing an interactive map providing data on deprivation which allows schools to take a targeted approach to Pupil Premium funding.

Work has already begun, involving the Data Innovation and Policy Specialist. As the Hub is already funded by a government grant, the Executive would encourage collaboration with other Greater Manchester Local Authorities, and so is fully supportive of this recommendation.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Extension: 2019