



Scrutiny Board

21 October 2014

Report title	Monitoring and Tracking Scrutiny Reviews		
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families		
	Councillor Philip Page Schools, Skills and Learning		
Wards affected	All		
Accountable director	Tim Johnson, Education and Enterprise		
Originating service	Standards and Vulnerable Pupils		
Accountable employee(s)	James McElligott Tel Email	Assistant Director 01902 554177 james.mcelligott@wolverhampton.gov.uk	
	Keren Jones Tel Email	Assistant Director 01902 555410 keren.jones@wolverhampton.gov.uk	
Report to be considered by	n/a		

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Board is recommended:

1. To note the progress and outcomes arising from the scrutiny reviews:
 - a) Child poverty
 - b) Maintaining and building relationships between the local authority and existing and emerging academies and free schools
2. To agree to sign off the child poverty review on the basis that the majority of recommendations have been implemented and there are procedures in place to progress and monitor the remaining actions.
3. To sign off the remaining actions of the maintaining and building relationships review, which have been superseded by more progressive work with schools, academies and free schools.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Board with the opportunity to review progress in respect of two scrutiny reviews.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The child poverty review focused on activities being planned or implemented to identify and support lone parents at risk of poverty, particularly those with young children under five years old, looking for either paid work or help to gain the skills needed to apply for local job vacancies.
- 2.2 Local authorities' statutory responsibilities for educational excellence are set out in section 13a of the Education Act 1996. That duty states that a local authority must exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards. Local authorities are discharging this duty within the context of increasing autonomy and changing accountability for schools, alongside an expectation that improvement should be led by schools themselves. The 'relationships review' therefore focused on how the Council could build effective and co-operative relationships in that changing context.

3.0 Progress on scrutiny reviews

3.1 Child Poverty

- 3.1.1 The review findings were presented to Cabinet at a meeting on 25 July 2012 and proposed a number of recommendations aimed at reducing levels of child poverty by providing support to lone parents with children under five years old.
- 3.1.2 A summary of the Child Poverty Scrutiny Review recommendations and a brief update on progress against each are provided at **appendix A** is attached. Cabinet approved the recommendations detailed in the report.

3.2 Maintaining and building relationships between the local authority with existing and emerging academies and free schools

- 3.2.1 At the time the scrutiny review was initiated it proved a challenge to encourage engagement of witnesses from academies and free schools. The evidence gathered was useful in helping to identify and develop relationships and the recommendations to a large extent were undertaken.
- 3.2.2 It is important to recognise that since the review there has been significant change within the organisation of the Council's schools' services and the relationships with schools. The reorganised arrangements both locally and nationally have moved forward and a more discrete relationship is now expected between local authorities and academies and free schools with prime accountability for their performance resting with the Secretary of State, through the Department for Education (DfE).
- 3.2.3 The recommendations have been completed or superseded as demonstrated in the monitoring sheet attached at **appendix B**.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

[CF/26082014/B]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 Under the terms of the 2010 Child Poverty Act, each local authority has a statutory responsibility to publish a Child Poverty Needs Assessment followed by a Child Poverty Strategy. The City Board will be taking over responsibility for overseeing work in the City to reduce poverty, including child poverty. This will ensure a strong partnership approach to tackling the issue.
- 5.2 Under Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 the Council has a duty to contribute to the development of the community by securing efficient primary and secondary education in the City. The Education Act 1996 also requires such functions to be carried out with a view to promoting high standards. The 2014 School Improvement Strategy is intended to ensure that the Council succeeds in delivering these statutory obligations.

[RB/29082014/X]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 There are no further equalities implications for the Council.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no direct corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 25 July 2012, Child Poverty Review, Cabinet

22 May 2013, Maintaining and building relationships between the local authority and existing and emerging academies and free schools, Cabinet

Appendix A

Child Poverty Scrutiny Review - Executive Response 25.7.12				
Recommendations to Cabinet	Accepted or Rejected Comments	Reasons for rejection(if appropriate)	Lead Director/ Organisation	Update on progress
1. In view of the national reductions in funding for CAB debt advice work careful consideration should be given to the child poverty implications of any future proposed reductions in the level of Council financial support available to CAB	Accepted		Helen Winfield, Welfare Rights Team Sheila Collett, Head of Neighbourhood Services Partnerships, Economy and Culture Heather Clark, Manager Strategic Project /Funding,	As part of the Coordinated Benefits Advice Strategy, Welfare Rights Service will become a Specialist Support Unit for organisations in Wolverhampton giving benefits information and advice. The Welfare Rights Service will be the 'expert hub' providing training, advice and consultancy to organisations so they can resolve benefit issues for their customers and expand the reach of benefit maximisation across communities. For the past year, CAB has received funding to run the Benefits Helpline and Response team (BHART) funded through Local Discretionary Grant Scheme (LDGS). Due to the end of this funding, BHART will stop at the end of March. However CAB has been successfully getting Lottery money for Local Advice Wolverhampton (LAW) which upskills other advice agencies to free up specialist provision. A Reducing Indebtedness Plan has been produced as part of the Welfare Reform Programme. Financial capability has been

			<p>Education & Enterprise</p> <p>Sheila Collett, Head of Neighbourhood Services Partnerships, Economy and Culture</p>	<p>included as an intervention under the Black Country European Investment Strategy in recognition of increased need for financial capability in response to Universal Credit.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Board should also note that with the disbanding of the Community Initiatives Team, the responsibility for the Council CAB Grant funding agreement has now passed to Sheila Collett, Head of Neighbourhood Services.</p>
2. The current service level agreement between the Council and Children's Centres needs to make specific reference to the need to work with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice, as part of efforts to reduce levels of child poverty and or to mitigate its effects.	Accepted		<p>Emma Bennett, Assistant Director Children, Young People and Families</p>	<p>The requirements of the Children's Centre National Core Purpose are inclusive of this area of work.</p> <p>A revised specification has been produced stating a key aim is to reduce the impact of child poverty through services that address issues of financial inclusion and employability.</p> <p>The aim of the plan is to increase the number of parents who are supported to be economically active.</p> <p>The narrowing of the gap in economic wellbeing is a specific action aimed at providing access to services that support parents and carers to be actively involved with their local children's centre and help them to prepare for employment and access training and volunteering opportunities.</p>

			<p>Sheila Collett, Head of Neighbourhood Services Partnerships, Economy and Culture</p>	<p>An economic inclusion lead (Sharon Leonard) has been nominated who is liaising with Job Centre Plus, attending relevant meetings including Employability Group and enhanced job clubs. Links have already been made with Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Service (NESS) centres who will be working with children's centres.</p> <p>A troubled families/child poverty strand is part of the Community Learning Strategy.</p>
3. Wolverhampton College and Adult Education Service should provide detailed plans to overcome the barriers identified to families considering education or training opportunities to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel	Accepted		<p>Heather Clark, Manager Strategic Projects/funding, Education & Enterprise/ Sheila Collett, Head of Community Safety Partnerships, Economy and Culture</p>	<p>Links have already been made with Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Service (NESS) centres which will be working with children's centres.</p> <p>A troubled families/child poverty strand is part of the Community Learning Strategy co-ordinated through Adult Education.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Board should also note that with departure of the Head of Services for Skills and the Adult Education Service Manager responsible for Community Learning, the responsibility for the co-ordination of the Community Learning Strategy has now passed to Sheila Collett, Head of Neighbourhood Services. This will ensure there is a stronger</p>

				<p>co-ordination with the Voluntary Community Sector and the Council's new approach to community based economic inclusion, community enterprise and routes to employment in deprived neighbourhoods.</p> <p>City of Wolverhampton College is working in partnership with several of the children's centres offering numerous courses to their parents. Provision is identified by the Children's Centres in collaboration with their service users. Where possible, courses are held at the children's centre, but if this is not feasible then courses are held at a community venue close by. The short courses have been more successful with parents, the longer courses which require parents to attend on a regular basis have been problematic (with irregular attendance, and low retention), which resulted in courses either being closed or deferred with a later start date.</p> <p>In particular, parents found it difficult to commit to the progression from tasters (six weeks) to accredited provision in functional skills in maths and english.</p> <p>Courses are also promoted in a Community Prospectus.</p> <p>Wolverhampton College and Wolverhampton Adult Education Service are working in</p>
--	--	--	--	--

			Aziza Chaudry, Wolverhampton Adult Education Service	<p>partnership to put together a joint Community Prospectus, which will identify and promote provision from both service providers as well as other organisations across the City.</p> <p>Further details about the work of the Adult Education Service in helping parents to overcome the barriers to considering education or training opportunities is attached at appendix C.</p>
4. Children's centres need to look at how current links with health practitioners, such as health visitors can be improved to better support children at the different stages of the Healthy Child Programme and to identify those considered to be at risk.	Accepted		Emma Bennett, Assistant Director, Children, Young People and Families	<p>The original report was considered by Children and Young People panel.</p> <p>Health Visitors are now integrated into eight children's centres. Further, pathways are being developed for an integrated approach to support based on the Healthy Child Programme requirements.</p>
5. A review of the success of schemes being trialled in Bushbury and Eastfield children's centres to identify and support lone	Accepted		Emma Bennett, Assistant Director, Children, Young People and Families	<p>The report was presented to Children and Young Scrutiny.</p> <p>This issue refers to Inspire Plus, funded by Public Health, which integrated CAB workers working alongside confidence building courses.</p>

parents to overcome barriers to employment. The findings to be reported to the Wellbeing and Resilience Board and children's centres management group. This group has been replaced by the Children's Centre Management Group				This has now ended. However the children's centres economic inclusion lead is making strong links with Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Service (NESS) Centres to ensure support is available. A meeting has been held between children's centres and Job Centre Plus to discuss their role in new rules concerning lone parents undertaking work related activity when their youngest child reaches the age of three. The national child poverty strategy suggests that support will be available, however it is not clear what this will look like.
6. The children's centres management group should be invited to review and monitor the effectiveness of current methods sharing of information provided by external agencies and to detail an action plan to deliver any necessary improvements.	Accepted		Emma Bennett, Assistant Director, Children, Young People and Families	The Council agreed to this arrangement. There is an agreed protocol signed by the Council and the Royal Wolverhampton Hospital Trust about Information Sharing and Early Intervention meetings. These meetings are integrated into children's centre practice now.
7. A report of the findings to be presented to the Wellbeing and	Accepted		Keren Jones, Assistant Director, Partnerships	A report on progress was considered at the last meeting of the Wellbeing and Resilience Board before it was wound up. In future the progress to

Resilience Board for detailed consideration and to make recommendations where appropriate to support this work.			Economy and Culture	<p>address child poverty will be considered directly by the Children's Trust Delivery Board, as well as by the new Social and Economic Inclusion Board, which has a wider brief to reduce poverty in the city.</p> <p>Further work on the child poverty agenda will be done through the annual review to be commissioned by the Children's Trust.</p> <p>The day-to-day tracking on the causes of child poverty will be presented to the City Board.</p> <p>The Social and Inclusion Board will be dealing with the outcomes of child poverty which will be overseen by the Early Help Board.</p>
8. The Wellbeing and Resilience Board to review the current process for tracking the progress of lone parents who have attended education or job training sessions	Accepted		Keren Jones, Assistant Director, Partnerships Economy and Culture	This was trialed as part of Inspire Plus, however proved complex due to information sharing issues. In future the progress to address child poverty will be considered directly by the Children's Trust Delivery Board, as well as by the new Social and Economic Inclusion Board, which has a wider brief to reduce poverty in the city.
9. The Children's Centres management group is invited to consider reviewing the	Accepted		Emma Bennett, Assistant Director, Children, Young People and Families	Job Centre Plus is invited to attend meetings, but is not regularly represented due to capacity Representatives of Job Centre Plus are required

current membership to include a representative of Jobcentre Plus to advise the group and share information which impacts on their work being done to support families across the network				to be members of the eight locality boards. Sharon Leonard, Children's Centres Economic Inclusion Lead, has met with Jobcentre Plus and is actively participating in the employability partnership and enhanced job clubs networks resulting in links with NESS centres. Active discussions with Job Centre Plus re new rules regarding lone parents are ongoing.
10. An early report presented to Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel on the current initiatives aimed at reducing the educational gap and an evaluation of their success.	Accepted		James McElligott, Assistant Director, Education & Enterprise	A briefing paper on the pupil premium was presented to Children and Young People Panel on 11 December 2013. The pupil premium is allocated to children from low income families, those who have been looked after continuously for more than six months and those of service families. A further briefing paper was sent to CYP panel in August in response to a request for more information. The briefing paper set out the main findings from Ofsted about how well schools in England are using the extra funding they receive to raise the attainment of their more disadvantaged pupils. A report giving a detailed analysis of the local picture and the impact of pupil premium in closing the educational attainment gap will be presented to CYP panel in April 2015.

11. The lead officer for the Troubled Families Initiative to present a report on progress to Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel after the first six months of its introduction and specific initiatives aimed at helping children to be 'school ready'	Accepted		Emma Bennett, Assistant Director Children, Young People and Families	A report on progress of Phase 1 of the initiative will be presented to future meeting of the CYP panel in 2015/16. The report will also include an update on implementation of Phase 2 from April 15.
12. All the original members' Assistant Director, organisations should renew their ¹ commitment to the Child Economy and Culture Poverty Pledge (published in 2009). Those organisations who have not signed the Child Poverty Pledge should be invited to do so and to report on their progress annually to	Accepted		Keren Jones, Assistant Director Partnerships Economy and Culture	<p>This has been superseded by a revised Child Poverty Strategy. The new partnership governance structure under the City Board – Social and Economic Inclusion Board – will take responsibility for anti-poverty initiatives going forward, including child poverty, ensuring ongoing commitment from partners.</p> <p>Under the new arrangement a workshop is planned for November 2014. At this workshop it is planned that we will ask partner organisations to pledge their involvements in supporting those affected through triage and signposting. Where appropriate they will also be given the opportunity to pledge to providing access to</p>

¹ This group has been replaced by the Local Strategic Partnership.

Cabinet.				digital access devices and personal budgeting support.
13. Director of Public Health to be invited to lead an evaluation of Health the effectiveness of current parenting support schemes	Accepted		Ros Jervis, Director of Public Health	A report on the effectiveness of parenting programme was presented to the Wellbeing & Resilience Board.

Appendix B

SCRUTINY REVIEW – MAINTAINING AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WITH EXISTING AND EMERGING ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS.

Recommendation 1 - Collaborative Working		
Upon considering a breadth and depth of evidence the review members recommend that:-		
Collaborative working must continue to be a key focus. Wolverhampton City Council aspires that all academies, schools and free schools sign up to the Wolverhampton School Improvement Partnership (WSIP)		
The review recognises the value of collaborative working especially through the role of the WSIP. Appropriate budget provision must be allocated.		
Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
WSIP is an independent organisation which requires members to pay a membership fee to join. The WSIP Board is responsible for setting this fee and for overseeing the business plan for the partnership. Although the Local Authority (LA) has a seat at the WSIP Board, the LA is not in a position to make a financial contribution to the partnership as it is not a member with access to benefits of the partnership as schools are. Therefore, the LA has resigned its place on the WSIP Board. WSIP does not have full membership of all schools in the City. Approximately 19 schools have decided not to buy in to membership of this body this year. These are decisions made by individual governing bodies, some of which include Councillors, and Head teachers. The LA is not in a position to mandate	The revised School Improvement Strategy for Wolverhampton is in draft form and was circulated for consultation in July 2014. This will be agreed early in the autumn following a period of consultation with all partners.	Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Achievement

<p>community schools to join WSIP – this must be a decision for individual governing bodies, and this decision should, like other financial decisions, be made on a value for money judgement.</p> <p>Collaborative working is a focus for the Council and for the Standards and Vulnerable Pupils team; however, this does not necessarily have to take place through the WSIP mechanism. Collaborative working, and working with all different types of schools (academies and free schools) can take place in other ways. For example, this year the LA Head of Standards and Vulnerable Pupils and the Assistant Director Learning and Achievement have visited many of our academy schools and liaised with key sponsors (e.g. through the Multi-Academy Trust sub-committee for standards) to ensure partnership working is a reality. Several leaders from academy schools are working to support other schools in the City (e.g. Aldersley Academy has provided very effective interim leadership at New Park Special School) and can access the full range of support from the LA (even if they have to pay for this support themselves). In providing evidence to the review group members the relationship with the local authority is an effective one and considered that the presence of an external sponsor could affect the current relationship because an external sponsor would not have to be part of the schools' improvement partnership. Councillors and officers acknowledged the system of schools working in isolation in Wolverhampton had not served the children of the city very well and that pupils should have the right to attend a good or outstanding school.</p>	<p>Collaborative working, and the need for the LA to have a relationship with and know all schools in the City (regardless of status) is a key aspect of this strategy, as is the aspiration for all schools to be Good or Outstanding by 2016. The vast majority of academy schools continue to work in partnership with other local schools – for example, nine out of 17 secondary schools in the City are now academies, and most of these have excellent partnership and transition arrangements in place with their primary feeder schools.</p>	
---	---	--

Recommendation 2 - Maintaining School Improvement

Vulnerable schools which might be targeted to become academies should be identified earlier and interventions should be in place to address failings.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
Councillors were informed of the importance of funding for the school improvement team as the local authority had invested £1.2 million to cover salaries of the post of Head of School Challenge and intervention and 13 other posts, some of the finance has been allocated to respond to various pressures, for example support for special schools. The School Improvement Team also offered support on issues ranging from human resources to financial matters and from the evidence received Councillors were informed of the importance of understanding the strengths and weaknesses in each school. This would be acknowledged as one of the many key measures of success.	<p>The revised School Improvement Strategy for Wolverhampton is in draft form and was circulated for consultation in July 2014. This will be agreed early in the autumn following a period of consultation with all partners. This strategy includes a revised risk assessment process which is more robust and based on a wider range of evidence to ensure early identification of need and the targeting of appropriate support and interventions. However, this will only be for maintained schools (not academies or free schools as these are directly accountable to Department of Education (DfE). The Standards and Vulnerable Pupils Team has been recently restructured and has faced budget reductions of more than £900,000.</p> <p>This has had a significant impact on the capacity of the team. As a result, there are significant risks of not being able to provide sufficient early intervention and support to those vulnerable schools which might be targeted to become academies.</p>	Head of Standards and Vulnerable Pupils and school Governing Bodies.

Recommendation 3 – Alternative Models of Education

Consideration of new or alternative models of education should be undertaken (not to view the academy model as the **only** model).

Alternative organisational structures should be considered, for example when a Head teacher's post becomes vacant the school's governing body should be advised that a Head teacher (substantive) post is not the only model available.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
An executive Head teacher referred the review group to other examples of schools working closely together to bolster support and promote shared learning. Councillors were encouraged by the local authority's attempts to continue collaborative working throughout the review process and were passionate about the local authority's role when working in this way. Councillors generally thought the local authority should explore any opportunities of this nature, particularly, to give serious consideration to any such arrangement.	It is standard practice within the Local Authority that when an Infant or Junior or Nursery school has a vacancy for a Head teacher, alternative models of education are always considered – this will include consideration of a range of options including amalgamation, hard or soft federation, or interim arrangements if required. These models of education are also considered for schools in difficulty. For example, St. Alban's and St. Thomas primaries formed a hard federation when St. Alban's went into Special Measures. Other models of education are also considered when schools share a site – for example, New Park Special School and Kingston PRU currently share a site, and both have interim leadership arrangements in place – this is an ideal opportunity to look at other possible models of education. Governing bodies have an important role to play in making these key decisions.	Head of Standards and Vulnerable Pupils and school Governing Bodies.

Recommendation 4 - Academy Sponsors

Wolverhampton City Council must encourage local, education specific, sponsors.

Evidence shows that local solutions have been successful and should be sought before using external sponsors.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
<p>Wolverhampton City Council has a unique relationship with its academy sponsors because all sponsors are based within the city and they are held accountable for the improving the performance of their schools. They do this by challenging traditional thinking about how schools are run and what they should be like for students by attempting to make a complete break with cultures of low aspiration and achievement.</p> <p>Councillors understood the importance of local sponsors, the relationships to the WSIP and partnership arrangements with other local schools as historically, the local authority, has always enjoyed a good relationship with voluntary aided, controlled and foundation schools. Councillors commended this arrangement and urged that any relationship with academies and free schools should not be seen as any different.</p>	<p>Officers within the Education and Enterprise Directorate will continue to work with all sponsors in the City and will endeavour to ensure that the best possible sponsors are found, where required, to meet individual need. This is often local sponsors who are keenly aware of local issues.</p> <p>However, occasionally it may be beneficial to consider other sponsors, particularly when specific areas of expertise (e.g. Special Education Needs) are required. The LA will work with schools, the DfE and academy sponsors as required to support appropriate partnerships and sponsorship arrangements which best meet the needs of all pupils. The LA will continue to develop relationships and work with all schools regardless of status. All schools (including academies and free schools) will be subject to an autumn term risk assessment and judgement.</p>	Assistant Director/Head of Standards and Vulnerable Pupils

Recommendation 5 - The Admission Policy

Wolverhampton City Council will work towards all academies, schools and free schools signing up to the local authority's admissions policy

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
<p>It is the responsibility of Wolverhampton City Council to ensure that its admission arrangements are compliant with the DfE's school admission code but where a school is the admission authority, this responsibility falls to the governing body or academy trust. The research also demonstrated the number of requests for places at pupils' preferred community or academy school does not exceed the school's admission limit, a place could potentially be allocated. However, if the number of requests is greater than the school's admission limit, applications will be prioritised in accordance with the Authority's admission criteria for over-subscribed academy and community schools.</p>	On-going	Service Manager, School Places and Transport