

# **Report to Rotherham Schools' Forum**

**18<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

## **Establishing a new commissioning model for Rotherham's Schools for permanently excluded pupils**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To seek agreement to develop a new model for commissioning appropriate provision on behalf of Rotherham's Schools for permanently excluded pupils.

### **Information and Advice**

In April 2015 the Schools Forum was made aware of the rising cost of provision for pupils with social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) and as a result initiated a review of arrangements for these pupils in Rotherham. Evidence was presented to the Forum that the cost of making provision for young people with SEMH was escalating. It was anticipated that if arrangements remained the same, an increased financial contribution would be required from the DSG.

By the end of July 2015 it became clear that the numbers of pupils permanently excluded from Rotherham's schools has continued to rise in secondary schools. There were 50 permanent exclusions from Rotherham's secondary schools.

The Forum has been provided with an update on the progress of the SEMH focus group. The update, in the form of a plan on a page has supported the need to change the model of provision in Rotherham. It proposes a strategy based on collective responsibility. This has been endorsed by the secondary school heads at their meeting on 25 June 2015. Further discussions will take place with special school heads and primary school heads. It will be necessary for schools to group themselves in effective clusters in order to progress the plans further.

The strategy identified number of steps for establishing collective responsibility in order to deliver the required changes. These steps involve:

- 1) Providing support to schools
- 2) Developing high quality Alternative Provision
- 3) Developing the role of the PRU
- 5) Developing the role of partnerships or clusters of learning communities.

In developing the role of the PRU and collaborations between learning communities, a potential new model of working is emerging. This will involve the devolution of resources centrally retained by Rotherham Council and the transfer of responsibility and accountability for these resources to clusters of learning communities. The devolution of resources will be subject to a service level agreement between the Local authority and cluster of learning communities. The devolution of resources and responsibilities for pupils with SEMH to partnerships of schools is in line with the national direction of travel and the Government's preferred approach to exclusions. This approach allows schools to continue to permanently exclude but means that schools share responsibility for arranging alternative provision and

ensuring that this is good quality and achieves positive educational outcomes. The success of collaborative working will require the need for schools to work effectively in partnerships in order to achieve greater 'economies of scale' which enable a more flexible response to a range of needs and remove the need for permanent exclusions. Following the transfer of resources to partnerships of schools, it will be necessary to ensure that the level of permanent exclusions are well managed in order to reduce the risk of escalating costs.

It is proposed to manage this risk by introducing a new methodology for commissioning provision for those young people permanently excluded from school. This will involve;

- 1) Setting quotas for provision at the PRU
- 2) Allowing for schools to purchase additional placements should they wish .

The methodology that allows schools to commission further places at the PRU will be the Cost Recovery Mechanism (CRM), in order that provision which falls outside partnership agreements and quotas may be funded and commissioned appropriately and responsibly.

The purpose of the meeting of schools forum on the 18 September is to;

- 1) Describe the proposed model for commissioning PRU placements
- 2) Discuss the Cost Recovery mechanism
- 3) Identify a small group of forum members to work up the proposals for the full schools forum on 2 October

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