ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	**Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel**
2.	Date:	**19th November 2010**
3.	Title:	**Transforming Rotherham Learning - Progress Update**
4.	Directorate:	**Children and Young People's Services**

5. Summary

Transforming Rotherham Learning was originally conceived as Rotherham's ambitious approach to Building Schools for the Future – a programme of investment from central government to improve the infrastructure of schools. As described in Rotherham's Strategy for Change document (attached) Rotherham took the opportunity to develop an approach that would deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families. The principles of Transforming Rotherham Learning (developed in consultation with children, families and schools) are that:

- *We are all responsible for all Rotherham's children and young people.*
- *All Rotherham learners will achieve; no one will be left behind.*
- *Learning is the core business: investment, policy and strategy must be driven by opportunities for learners.*
- *Learning communities will be rooted in and responsive to the needs of local people.*

Rotherham's vision is to deliver these principles by developing 14 geographical learning communities, based on the location of Rotherham's secondary schools, as well as two faith-based learning communities.

In June 2010 the new coalition government cancelled the investment through Building Schools for the Future. However, Rotherham remains committed to the principles of Transforming Rotherham Learning and the concept of delivering these through multi-agency learning communities, firmly rooted in the needs of local communities. This commitment is now embedded in Rotherham's policy framework and has started to re-shape service provision Children and Young People's Services and, in particular, within the School Effectiveness Service.

The actions and consequent developments set out in this report identify the means by which we will better ensure that all children and young people are safe, in good health and making at least expected progress so that they can be in successful education, training or employment at age 19 and beyond into a prosperous future.

6. Recommendations

a) That the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel receives this report.

b) That the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel endorse the continued commitment to the development of learning communities as the key delivery vehicle for the Children and Young People's Plan 2010-2013.

7. Proposals and Details

Rotherham remains committed to the principles of Transforming Rotherham Learning and the concept of delivering these through multi-agency learning communities, firmly rooted in the needs of local communities. This commitment is now embedded in Rotherham's policy framework.

- The RMBC Corporate Plan has six priorities, including 'ensuring quality education for all; ensuring people have opportunities to improve skills, learn and get a job.' The plan identified that we will 'develop learning communities around our schools to increase opportunities for families and adults to develop new skills.'

- Rotherham's Children and Young People's Plan 2010-2013 has identified 'four big things'. These are keeping children and young people safe, prevention and early intervention, tackling inequalities and Transforming Rotherham Learning. Transforming Rotherham Learning is clearly identified as the delivery vehicle that will enable us to realise our vision for the other 'big things'.

- The School Effectiveness Service (SES) plan is now named 'Transforming Rotherham Learning' and has been endorsed by Rotherham's headteachers.

In a continuing drive to ensure that the strategic intent is located in professional practice at each level of our operations a series of activities has taken place:

- A joint CYPS leadership session to develop the connections between the early intervention and prevention agenda with strategies to improve standards and progress across all key stages. The planning, delivery and follow up involved all CYPS directors and team leaders whose workforce will need to bring impact in these vital areas.

- Continued leadership development activities involving colleagues from all children's services in Swinton and a revisiting of prior practice in Clifton (The Place). The lessons learned will inform further work across the borough

- The restructure of the School Effectiveness Service will ensure alignment to support Learning Communities and the children and families who reside within them. This was the focus of two SES development days in September 2010 and a subsequent cross-phase School Improvement Partner session.

- The Joint Headteachers meeting on 9th September 2010 confirmed the new approach and gave Learning Communities an opportunity to determine their key priorities for 2010/11. As a result 11 Learning Communities are involved in, or considering forming, Strategic Performance Groups (SPG). We see these as vital in taking the progress of all children and young people beyond national average expectations. The attached Change Plan sets out the intentions to develop Strategic Performance Groups in all Learning Communities by September 2011.

- Work is currently underway to develop a light touch governance model for Learning Communities that will both connect stakeholders and champion outcomes for all children and young people in our communities.

These developments are attracting interest and recognition for Rotherham from the National Strategies, DfE and the National College.

Our next steps:

1. Re-assert very clear priorities and refresh the rationale for Learning Communities so as to reflect the emergent 'new reality' that is re-shaping many aspects of the CYPS / SES and the relationship of these services to schools
2. Ensure that the Learning Communities are clearly perceived as an opportunity to create / maintain effective system-wide relationships between children's professionals and between our schools in an uncertain period.
3. Maintain the integrity of provision for young people and their families and engender confidence in the quality and resilience of our services to them.
4. Ensure that smaller schools and agencies, in particular, do not become isolated and that there is an exploration of securing economies of scale, as well as the cost-effectiveness of key areas of provision through enhanced collaboration
5. Recognise that wider service effectiveness is dependent upon improved leadership and upon the creation of a leadership paradigm that is responsive to changing circumstance.
6. Build on the innovative practice in wider-service collaboration that is in evidence within some schools and within areas of CYPS - the development of these local solutions and improvements needs scaling-up.

To achieve this will entail - deploying successful leaders who accept responsibilities beyond their immediate remit, the goal being to create a workforce development strategy for CYPS and schools that becomes a largely self-generating enterprise, grounded within the professional networks within the Learning Communities.

Examining priorities – developments now required or in progress:

- The establishment of strong and well-understood professional protocols for early support and intervention at the Learning Community level and the effective alignment of these with safeguarding strategies and the enhancement of the levels of collective professional accountability in these areas, within the Learning Communities.
- The development of a sustainable leadership model for enhanced collaboration between children's professionals across and between the Learning Communities.
- The identification of strategic priorities that capitalise upon and enhance collaborative working especially those pertaining to provision for vulnerable young people and their families / carers.
- The identification of strategic priorities that enhance provision for learning through phase / sector and which require and permit accelerated learning opportunity.
- The creation of a viable 'supplementary' system of challenge and support through each Learning Community for schools and children's services provision, within the context of a scaled down SES; in effect a development of the current SPG (Strategic Performance Group) pilots.

Key benefits of Learning Communities (as they further develop):

Considerable benefits potentially accrue for learners, families and for Learning Communities if we get this right; in which they will:

- **Ensure that every child and young person within the Learning Community** makes at least the minimum expected level of progress at each and every key stage irrespective of background or disposition
- **Aid the integration of services** because it becomes more efficient to work across a Learning Community where family knowledge is shared and local issues are well-understood
- **Better connect to emergent Safeguarding and Early Prevention 'Service Areas'**, since it is crucial to connect these organisational frameworks to real people at a level well below that of 'crisis and intervention'
- **Find it easier to meet the needs of every student**, since a collaborative approach can find personalised solutions appropriate to every level of learning and need
- **Deal more effectively with provision around special needs, talents and abilities**, especially where a special school is a member of the Learning community and expertise in aspects of need is shared between professionals
- **Distribute innovation** through sharing the costs, in time and resources, of new developments and through working collectively with other partners
- **Transfer professional knowledge** more readily through joint workforce development and multi-agency collaboration, mentoring and coaching
- **Support new leaders** since existing leaders within the Learning community will have highly developed local knowledge and networks
- **Build leadership capacity and strengthen succession planning** since staff will be strongly engaged with each school and service context
- **Become more efficient in the use of resources** because expensive technologies and increasingly scarce human resources are optimised
- **Provide support in crises** because when these happen the Learning Community can intervene with immediate support without provoking defensive resistance

Through these strategies - we need to create the conditions in which schools and associated agencies take ownership of issues and reject the notion that it is somebody else's responsibility to provide a solution. The Learning Communities are thus the basic units of a self-improving system and ultimately will provide experience that develops professional leadership at the wider system level.

8. Finance

Within the context of significantly reduced budgets and spending the costs associated with TRL and the establishment of the Learning Communities is broadly cost neutral (primarily requiring a re-alignment of existing resources); though with fewer resources an emphasis will need to be placed upon the development of key strategies through a range of small scale pilot activities through which best practice is developed and shared. Effective communications will be a critical feature of this strategy and further developing the use of the Portal is a very important dimension of this and decisions around the future of existing key assets, such as this, potentially impact upon our capacity to deliver.

Uncertainties around funding are widespread and include: the current review of the DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant); the potential impact of the 'pupil premium' and which pupils / schools may benefit from this; the uncertainties around grant funding, (examples will include:- Specialist Schools grant / School Sports Partnerships grant, etc.). The impact of changes to revenue funding in CYPS and the impact of further potential cuts to specific elements of CYPS funding are unknowns.

These funding scenarios actually strengthen the overall case for the development of Learning Communities (so as to maximise the impact of spending and secure

economies of scale) but, clearly, may impact on the pace and sequence of development and upon the breadth of working priorities.

For example: - the ways of working recommended will, when fully developed, lead to potential savings through the improved alignment of services around children, young people and their families and greater efficiencies in resource sharing and utilisation within schools. The potential for Learning Communities to develop as 'economic units' is currently being explored through the TRL Leadership SSG, (Strategy Steering Group), as a direct consequence of funding uncertainties.

Workforce development priorities will need to align, so as to reflect the requirement to extend leadership capacity across a multi-agency context to ensure that the drive towards the TRL priorities is reflected in all aspects of provision at the local level.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Transforming Rotherham Learning is embedded in the policy and planning framework for Children and Young People's Services, however, there is a risk that if this is not effectively communicated and understood, this strategic commitment will not be reflected in delivery across the partnership and the ambition of Transforming Rotherham Learning will not be translated into outcomes for children, young people and their families.

In the current political and financial climate there is a risk that there will not be sufficient resources to drive forward changes and improvements. In particular the capacity of the workforce is likely to decrease and innovative work that is non-statutory will be at risk.

The policy framework at national level is still emerging. Current indications are that there is a drive from local government for more autonomous schools with the option to be independent from the local authority.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda

The national policy context is still emerging. A White Paper is due from the Department for Education in the autumn. The contents of the White Paper are likely to have implications for Transforming Rotherham Learning.

Transforming Rotherham Learning and the development of learning communities is fully embedded into the Corporate Plan, Children and Young People's Plan 2010-2013, Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy, Children and Young People's Directorate Plan and the Transforming Rotherham Learning Partnership Plan.

As each learning community develops its own planning and reporting structures, these will need to be effectively fed into the corporate policy framework, with particular reference to the plans referenced here.

11. Background Papers/Consultation

- Rotherham Strategy for Change Executive Summary
- Strategic Performance Group Change Management Plan
- Early Intervention and Prevention Policy
- TRL Position Paper

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