

“5 Steps to Collective Responsibility”

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Strategy for Young People with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMH)

1. Developing a new strategy for young people with Social Emotional and Mental Health difficulties in Rotherham

Schools, partners and the local authority in Rotherham, have developed a new strategy for children and young people with social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. This strategy is based on the principle of collective responsibility and has resulted from a period of review, research, discussion and debate.

A review of arrangements in Rotherham for young people with SEMH difficulties was initiated in May 2015. The scope of the review considered the suitability of Rotherham MBC's services and provision for children and young people with SEMH needs. It explored whether the current arrangements provide quality outcomes for children and young people with SEMH needs, which are cost effective and provide value for money.

The focus of the review included the following areas:

- Research into national guidance, initiatives and good practice.
- The role and remit of the four Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) called Aspire
- The nature of partnership working between the local authority and schools and its partners
- Consideration of options aimed at improving the service offer for this vulnerable group of learners
- Consultation with key partners who work and make provision in schools. This has included:
 - focus group meetings with schools
 - individual meetings with secondary head teachers
 - dialogue with the Aspire PRU leadership team
 - dialogue with senior leaders within the Local Authority

2. National context

It is widely recognised that children and young people with SEMH needs often experience considerable difficulties in making the most of opportunities that the education system provides.

These young people may also affect the ability of schools to provide a calm and well-managed learning environment, which has a corresponding impact on the learning experience of their peers.

Nationally, local authorities make a variety of arrangements to support the learning of this group of vulnerable but challenging young people through partnerships with schools and other partners.

The Department for Education has published three important publications over the previous 18 months. These publications have promoted a national debate and re-evaluation of services and provision for young people who are at risk of permanent exclusion as a result of their SEMH needs. These are:

- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (updated May 2015)
- National Schools Exclusion Trial (July 2014)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental advice for school staff (March 2015)

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: This helpfully defines a new category of special educational needs relating to those children with SEMH difficulties.

Paragraph 6.32 of the Code of Practice describes broad areas of need and provides the following definition for this type of special educational need:

“Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder”.

This definition refocuses attention on the causes of challenging or disruptive behavior and is aimed at encouraging interventions which address the identified need.

National Schools Exclusion Trial: This trial explored new ways of working with children who were at risk of permanent exclusion. An evaluation of schools involved in the trial identified a number of benefits, including:

- increased use of partnership working and collective decision making through the use of panels, e.g. district panels, fair access panels
- enhanced quality assurance, accreditation systems and service level agreements for providers of alternative provision (AP)

- increased collaboration between schools, e.g. pupils transferred to another school for a trial period; an increase in managed moves
- revised commissioning procedures; more early intervention programmes to prevent exclusion
- use of time-limited AP (to avoid permanent exclusion)
- closure of PRUs.

Local Authority lead officers and teachers agreed that the level of partnership working had increased as a result of the trial, particularly where managed moves were undertaken. Processes were considered to be more transparent and rigorous, and there was an improvement in information about pupils and the ability to track their progress.

Schools were able to more effectively use data to identify patterns of behaviour in order to put in place appropriate support for pupils.

Learning support units, inclusion coordinators, and revised school timetables were considered to be effective in relation to:

- preventing exclusions
- improving attendance
- improving attainment
- improving behaviour.

Those pupils designated as being “at risk” changed during this trial. Schools’ judgements of pupils at risk of exclusion were reviewed regularly and adjusted. The provision put in place to support many of these pupils was deemed to be effective due to their removal from the “at risk” list.

Teachers reported that on average, fewer children had been permanently excluded from those schools involved in the trial when compared to similar schools. However, it was difficult to identify improvements in specific positive outcomes for learners within the time scale of the trial.

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental advice for school staff: The guidance acknowledges that all pupils benefit from learning and developing in a well ordered school environment that fosters and rewards good behaviour and sanctions poor and disruptive behaviour.

The guidance also suggests that schools should consider whether continuing disruptive behaviour might be as a result of unmet educational or other needs. The non-statutory advice clarifies the responsibility of the school, the role of the school in supporting a child or young person whose behaviour - whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise - may be related to an unmet mental health need.

Additionally, the guidance contains helpful advice on systems and processes that schools should put in place to improve their arrangements.

3. Local context

There are a number of aspects to Rotherham's local context:

- 1) The history of SEMH provision in Rotherham
- 2) The number of exclusions
- 3) The current model of provision
- 4) The cost of this model of provision as a result of high levels of displacement.

Rotherham MBC has tried a number of approaches over the last five years to manage the numbers of children who are permanently excluded from schools. Approximately five years ago a new strategy was embarked upon whereby the Local Authority's Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) were managed by schools and the flow in and out of the PRU was controlled through decisions reached by schools working in locality partnerships.

There was some disagreement about the success of this approach and it was abandoned much to the dismay of the schools at the time. Since then there has been a lack of trust and partnership between schools and the Local Authority on this matter. It is perceived by many that the current levels of exclusion are as a result of this period of distrust and disappointment.

In the following months and years the levels of exclusion have increased year on year

Permanent exclusions in Rotherham's Primary and Secondary Schools 2010 -2015		
Primary	Year	Total
	2014/15	7
	2013/14	6
	2012/13	8
	2011/12	12
	2010/11	5
Secondary	Year	Total
	2014/15	50
	2013/14	24
	2012/13	10
	2011/12	13
	2010/11	13
Total Primary & Secondary	Year	Total
	2014/15	57
	2013/14	30
	2012/13	18
	2011/12	30
	2010/11	18

Rotherham MBC compares with the national funding picture as follows:

- National average (England only) spend on the high needs block of funding is 13% of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)
- In Rotherham this equates to 9% of the DSG and amounts to £22 million.
- High needs block funding provides for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and this includes SEMH arrangements.

Rotherham Borough Council's current arrangements for young people with SEMH needs are shown below:

SEMH provision	Cost (£ million)	Number of pupils	Average cost per place
Other LA special schools	0.052	5	£10,600
4 Aspire PRU's	2.00	114	£18,000
		-	-
Out of borough placements	1.73	29	£59,000
Total	£3.78	154	£24,564

- Rotherham Council has 4 PRUs covering Primary and Secondary phases of education collectively called Aspire.
- The Aspire Primary PRU is offered across two provisions and accommodates 24 learners.
- The Aspire Secondary PRU is based on two sites and accommodates 90 learners.
- Rotherham does not have a specialist school for pupils with SEMH needs.
- Rotherham places 34 young people who have SEMH needs in educational establishments which are not maintained by Rotherham MBC. This is a relatively low number of pupils but the cost of this provision is high. There are 5 young people placed in other local authority special schools for pupils with SEMH needs. There are 29 pupils placed in a variety of independent non maintained settings for young people with complex needs.
- The majority of learners with SEMH needs require assistance with their travel arrangements. This varies from individual taxi arrangements, a place on a commissioned mini bus, or the provision of a bus pass which enables the young person to use public transport.

- In 2014/15 a total of 154 pupils received education outside the normal offer as a result of their SEMH needs. The total cost of this offer was £3.78 million.

Very few young people now attend alternative provision outside the PRU . There are a limited number of established or available providers of alternative education in Rotherham . Some schools manage their own “in house AP” , but this is described as being at risk as a result of funding shortages.

School based colleagues on the SEMH focus groups described the current set of arrangements in the following way;

- There is a lack of clarity about resources and outcomes for learners.
- There are high levels of exclusion from a small number of schools.
- There is high usage of the PRU facilities causing stress and strain on the system.
- There is lack of collaboration between schools, LA and partners
- There is some good practice in pockets in Rotherham
- There is a lack of capacity to respond speedily in a crisis.
- There is little sense of moral responsibility
- There is a lack of clear strategy
- There are a limited number of providers of alternative education.
- There is lack of clarity about statutory duties

4. Rotherham’s new approach for young people with SEMH Needs

Creating a new approach to Rotherham’s arrangements for pupils with SEMH needs has been a priority for the Schools Forum. Discussions have taken place with groups of head teachers and with individual head teachers. There has been a particularly strong consensus that arrangements in Rotherham need to change. Early in the discussions a shared moral purpose was established as follows;

Rotherham Borough Council, its partners and Schools will take collective responsibility for children and young people with SEMH difficulties in order that they thrive, achieve and that the local offer for this vulnerable group represents value for money.

The moral purpose is underpinned by a group of agreed principles which are as follows;

Principles of Collective Responsibility for Children and Young People with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties.

Rotherham’s new arrangements should;

1. Be based on the equitable use of resources which is affordable, with realistic expectations and clearly defined outcomes, with regular reports to schools forum;

- 2 Be a whole Borough response which is informed by transparent information and data and knowledge of local and national good practice;
- 3 Recognise the importance of early intervention and be family and person centred;
- 4 Recognise the importance of collective responsibility, which includes education, health and care partners and be based on a shared understanding of what is expected of all parties;
- 5 Provide a graduated response with thresholds to prevent escalation into expensive out of borough provision;
- 6 Provide local and flexible solutions which are developed and managed by schools;

The following recommendations are as a result of the discussions and have become known as “5 steps to collective responsibility”.

Five Steps to Collective Responsibility

Step 1: Create a new role and remit for the Aspire PRU

Currently, it is agreed that the Aspire PRU is a problematic environment in which to work and learn. The number of pupils being admitted is too high. Many pupils arrive without any previous planning and without helpful information from schools to support a successful transition into the Aspire PRU. Attendance is approximately 60%.

We need to:

- reduce numbers of permanently excluded pupils attending the Aspire PRU
- relocate Aspire PRUs into smaller scale units
- develop vocational PRU centres
- develop a specialism within the PRU system offer for young people from the Slovak community
- ensure that good quality information is available to the staff at the Aspire PRU prior to any admission
- assess the needs of pupils and where appropriate, promote the reintegration of pupils attending the Aspire PRU back into a mainstream school, alternative provision, college or specialist provision.
- Develop the Rowan site as a Therapeutic Intervention Centre

We know we will have been successful when:

- the number of pupils attending the Aspire PRU reduce to agreed levels
- the Aspire PRU is a safe place to learn and work

- attendance levels increase
- the outcomes for learners improve
- pupils access a range of vocational opportunities
- where appropriate, learners transfer to a more suitable school or learning placement.

Step 2: Establish a Menu of Alternative Provision in Rotherham

Currently there are very few alternative models of educational provision available to young people in Rotherham.

We need to:

- appoint an Alternative Provision development officer
- arrange a market place event for alternative providers
- encourage competition in the market place
- develop school based alternative provision
- establish a quality assurance system for alternative providers
- develop Rotherham's online menu of alternative provision.

We know we will have been successful when:

- the number of alternative providers available in Rotherham increases
- there is a menu of Alternative Providers available to schools and the local authority
- any provision on the menu has been quality assured
- young people access alternative provision and progress into employment or training
- young people are highly engaged with their alternative learning experience.

Step 3: Establish locality SEMH partnerships

Currently there is little evidence of collaboration between schools and between schools and the Local Authority. Local clusters of schools will need to be established in order to manage a new set of arrangements which could include:

- managed moves
- short breaks
- alternative provision
- links to the PRU system
- CPD
- identification of good practice.

We need to:

- identify which schools will work in partnerships
- appoint partnership development officers from schools in partnerships

- develop a local menu of options
- develop local partnerships with a wider group of partners across early help, health, social care and education providers.
- Develop new models of working with CAHMS

We know we will have been successful when:

- schools meet on a regular basis and partners from other agencies” sit around the table” to help find local solutions
- the partnership has made a local plan
- there is a local menu of options
- there are local CPD opportunities
- the partnership retains the majority of its learners in its learning community.

Step 4: Develop a commissioning model for PRU, Alternative Provision and partnership working

Currently admissions to the Aspire PRU are not effectively controlled and there is no cap on the use of Aspire PRU provision. The existing model of Aspire PRU provision is financially unsustainable and does not provide value for money.

We need to:

- introduce a system for allocating a quota of Aspire PRU places for partnerships
- introduce a commissioning charge for places at the Aspire PRU which exceed the agreed quota
- develop a mechanism for devolving “released “ funding to partnerships
- agree a memorandum of understanding between school partnerships and the Local Authority which establishes a long term commitment to bring about the required change.

We know we will have been successful when:

- the number of permanent exclusions reduce
- the size of the Aspire PRU population reduces
- schools have developed effective partnerships to which the Council can confidently devolve funding, resources and responsibility
- Parents and young people feel more engaged with learning.

Step 5: Develop Rotherham’s Fair Access Protocol and permanent exclusion arrangements

Currently, the FAP is emerging as a useful forum for making decisions about pupils who are hard to place. The FAP agreement needs to be amended and ratified with agreements relating to managed moves and reintegration from the Aspire PRU. Schools are interpreting exclusion regulations differently and there is a lack of clarity in guidance.

We need to:

- establish locality agreements on managed moves
- establish locality agreements on short breaks
- further develop Rotherham's FAP and consult on the role and remit of the Fair Access Panel.

We know we will have been successful when:

- a new FAP agreement is place
- schools feel confident in the new arrangements
- young people have a school place identified without delay
- pathways out of the Aspire PRU into mainstream school settings and other alternatives are available when appropriate
- revise guidance for exclusions.

7 Implementation Timelines

It is recommended that the key steps required to deliver the necessary change to enable young people with SEMH difficulties to achieve their full potential are part of a phased implementation as follows:

- The new arrangements will be agreed by **December 2015**.
- Schools will have formed their partnership clusters by **December 2015**.
- Funding will be devolved to partnerships by **April 2015**.
- A menu of Alternative Provider options will be available by **September 2016**