

Schools Forum

Secondary Area Behaviour Partnerships

This report relates to both maintained and academy schools

Recommendation

The Schools Forum is recommended to:

- Request that options for providing the £125,000 de-delegated funding for students with 'complex and acute needs' are brought to the June Forum for consideration.
- Request that officers include an evaluation of the funding of Area Behaviour Partnerships in the review of all DSG centrally managed activity and bring proposals for sustainable long-term funding to the forum for consideration

Background 2011-2014

1. The current model for the principles and practice of the ABP Initiative arose directly from the context of the closure of the Warwickshire PRU in April 2011.
2. The main rationale for the setting up of ABPs arose directly from that specific context: their role was clearly "to prevent permanent exclusion", using 'Alternative Educational Provision' as a prime strategy to achieve that.
3. The ABPs have been very successful in fulfilling that role, greatly reducing both permanent and fixed-term exclusions (details of which were provided at the Forum in December 2013), and the ABPs' use of both internal and external 'Alternative Provision' has received very positive judgements from Ofsted during School Inspections. In addition, the ABPs have played a leading role in consolidating collaborative partnership amongst all the secondary schools in each of the four areas.
4. The four ABPs have developed their practice and procedures considerably during the past three years of their existence in order to take action to meet the educational and behavioural needs of those students at risk of permanent exclusion. Whilst the procedures and practices within the four ABPs differ considerably owing to their various different features (e.g. geographical size, existence of GSs, deprivation indices), it is useful to cite examples of innovative practice from certain areas.
5. A good example has been the development of Learning Support Centres (often called 'Re-Focus Centres') within schools, offering a range of more personalised interventions, from one-to-one mentoring to one-to-one GCSE tuition for individual students. These Centres have then provided an innovative resource

across an area, enabling a student to have 'respite' from a difficult situation in her/his own school by taking up a temporary placement in another school's Centre. It's worth noting that such Centres are seen as internal 'Alternative Provision' by Ofsted and, again, have been very favourably judged during recent Ofsted Inspections in Warwickshire.

6. Learning Support Centres in schools obviously require considerable, sustainable funding for dedicated staffing, including Coordinators, TAs and specialist English and maths teaching time, and this internal Alternative Provision has been resourced in schools by ABPs from the ABP budget just as external Alternative Provision has.

The Future: 2014-2016

7. Whilst that original role remains critically important, we would strongly contend that the 2011 context has already changed considerably and will continue to do so over the next two years. ABPs will have to address different challenges in this period, arising from a new set of circumstances and factors:
 - LA development of specialist inclusion support from September 2014, including specialist inclusion support centres, for primary aged pupils at risk of exclusion. This offers the opportunity for closer future liaison over primary-secondary transition for vulnerable and challenging students, though it obviously cannot assist directly regarding the current Y7-Y11 students in secondary schools.
 - LA response to the new SEN Code of Practice for 0 to 25 Years, as from 01.09.14, and the 'Local Offer'.
 - New AEN school in Nuneaton, as from September 2015.
 - LA requirement to reduce spending on 'Out-of-County' SEN provision and the need to improve educational outcomes from all such provision.
 - Increased prices of Alternative Provision (e.g. Hybrid Arts daily rate has increased from £55 to £70 per day per student from April 2014).
 - Unsustainability of smaller Alternative Providers (e.g. Arthur Rank Training went into 'administration' in March 2014).
 - Increased transport costs.
 - Greater reluctance by schools to release students for external Alternative Provision as a result of the increased pressure of external accountability measures.
 - Re-generation of schools' partnerships with F.E. Colleges.
 - Increase in number of students with serious social, emotional and mental health issues (N.B. See Section 6.3 in Draft SEN Code of Practice for a full discussion of 'Social, Mental and Emotional Health').
 - Increase in the impact of 'social media' on young people's lives and the associated negative effects on vulnerable students.
 - Increase in number of students who are 'school refusers'.
 - A small but significant and increasing number of students whose needs cannot be met by the current range of Alternative Provision. In the context of the current transformation of GCSE assessment to a much less flexible, more traditional model, there is real concern that this issue will grow into a critical issue.

8. In addition, whilst the context has changed, there is a need to improve outcomes for students at risk of exclusion in order to:
- Reduce the number of young people who are NEET: early predictions regarding the 2013 figure for the County, not yet released by Government, indicate that the percentage of 16-18 year olds categorized as NEET will have risen, reversing the downward trend of 2010 to 2012.
 - Reduce youth offending: ABP Coordinators report that they are addressing serious behavioural issues, including criminal behaviour, amongst a greater number of students.
 - Reduce the amount of time students spend out of a learning environment due to absence or exclusion: ABP Coordinators report that their schools are addressing a rising trend of 'school refusal' amongst students.
 - Reduce the number of students referred to the High Needs Panel for specialist provision.
9. A new model for ABPs' principles and practice needs to be created for the future, therefore, developing strategies to address the issues listed in 2.1 above, and this will have budget implications for ABPs.

A New Strategic Model for ABPs

Any such new model must take ABPs practice and outcomes to a higher level. This will involve an increase in the quality and range of alternative provision, further development of schools' practice, and improvement to the monitoring of the impact of ABPs.

10. Quality and Range of Provision

- Development of provision to meet the needs of the most challenging students by enhancing existing full-time provision offered by Shaftesbury Young People and by River House Individual Learning Programmes.
- Much more effective one-to-one or small group provision of GCSE English and mathematics tuition.
- Commissioning of professional Cognitive Therapy counselling and mentoring to support individual students in order to supplement the available CAMHS provision.
- Major 'offensive' to develop a more effective and more actively supportive strategy to combat drug abuse by students.

11. Development of Schools' Practice

- Identification of the core 'Inclusion' team within each school, and development of a major CPD programme to extend the team's understanding and skills in addressing the needs of challenging students.
- Need to develop a school ethos and culture regarding 'inclusion' and 'inclusiveness' amongst all teaching and support staff (N.B. See Section 6.5, 'Schools', in Draft SEN Code of Practice).
- Full commitment to, and engagement with, the network of relevant LA professional agencies, e.g. CAF team, Priority Families team, Social Care teams, with the aim of achieving better coordination and integration of the support for the individual.
- Improved continuity of provision as students transfer to secondary phase

(see Para 7 above): close liaison with EIS Area Operational Managers.

12. Monitoring of the Impact of ABPs

- Efficient County-wide mapping of ABP provision, to be organized according to 3 'Levels of Intervention' to coordinate with SEN Local Offer: 'Universal', 'Targeted', 'Specialist'
- Efficient County-wide tracking of all students engaged in ABP provision, with succinct indication of salient factors affecting their educational success, e.g. FSM, LAC, EAL, SEN, Priority Family
- Much more rigorous monitoring and measuring of each student's progress, enabling full evaluation of the degree to which the attainment 'gap' has been 'narrowed' for the 'vulnerable' students listed and their ascent to higher levels of intervention halted and reversed
- Warwick University study to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of ABPs

Resource Implications

13. One of the main difficulties currently faced by ABPs is the 'top-slicing' of £125k from the overall annual ABP budget to provide a resource for students with 'complex and acute needs' who arrive in Warwickshire from out of the County in mid-career. ABPs do not control this spending and so cannot reasonably be held to account for outcomes. It is therefore recommended that the funding for these students does not come from the funding assigned to ABPs and is found from savings elsewhere in the high needs block of DSG.
14. This loss of funding described in 4.1 above exacerbates what is already a critical issue for ABPs: how to provide for those students within the ABPs' schools who require a level of social and emotional support that is beyond the role and remit of ABPs. There is a small but significant number of such students in each Area, students whose difficulties and needs have not been sufficiently recognized in earlier years, i.e. students without a 'statement'. As the full impact of these students' difficulties and needs becomes apparent, often in KS4, they may require full-time 'Alternative Provision' that is best provided outside a mainstream setting, e.g. by means of a full-time, personalized River House programme, at a cost of £25-30k, in order to avoid permanent exclusion.
15. The 4 ABPs currently support intervention with 208 students; 129 of these students attend external Alternative Provision from 1 to 5 days per week. A breakdown of the 208 students according to Gender shows 48F and 160M. A breakdown of the students according to Year Group shows Y7x10, Y8x13, Y9x43, Y10x63, Y11x 84.
16. 3 of the 4 ABPs are now under severe budget pressure in the current academic year. 1 Area estimates that it will be £70k over budget by the end of the year. 1 Area has had to deny Alternative Provision support for 12 students in order to remain within budget and estimates that it needs an additional £100k for Alternative Provision. 1 Area has reluctantly removed 6 students from Alternative Provision in order to remain within budget. 1 Area should break even.
17. The cost of making provision for those at imminent risk of permanent exclusion is particularly high. ABP Coordinators estimate that there is a current need for a minimum of 10 full-time, personalised learning programmes such as those

provided by River House: total cost of £250k. The cost of professional consultancy services from a qualified Cognitive Behaviour Therapist currently being commissioned is £350 per day.

18. ABPs are therefore seeking options from the Schools Forum both for how the £125k 'top slice' can be restored to the overall ABP budget of £2.4m for the academic year 2014/15 and for how that overall budget can be increased from £2.4m in the financial year 2015-16. We appreciate that this is a time when 'efficiencies' are being implemented across all LA services, but we believe that this represents a good case of 'spend to save': that money spent now on local Area-based interventions and capacity-building will assist in reducing future costs at County level.

Conclusions

19. ABPs have been very effective at reducing the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions and improving the quality of provision for excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion. However, the original role of the ABPs at the time of the closure of the PRU has changed radically over the past 3 years, and there is now a need to develop the strategic approach of ABPs in order to improve outcomes for challenging and vulnerable students within schools and to reduce the numbers referred to the High Needs Panel for specialist provision.

20. Whilst there is much evidence that ABP spending is having a significant beneficial impact for such students, schools report that there is insufficient funding to provide appropriate provision for those pupils who need it.

21. It is acknowledged that more can now be done to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of ABP spending. This will be done in 2014/15 through detailed tracking of both spending and pupil outcomes. The work of ABPs will also be evaluated by Warwick University.

22. In order to respond to the significant cost pressures described above, it is recommended that, for the academic year 2014/15, ABPs receive the full delegated funding of £2.4m and that the funds de-delegated for the provision of "complex and acute needs" pupils, the 'top slice' of £125k, are found from savings elsewhere in DSG. Furthermore, in the context of the LA's current work on future priorities, strategies and funding options within the DSG, the ABPs wish to seek an increase to the current overall ABP budget within the financial year 2015-16.

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