

Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Nuneaton Education Strategy Update

17 November 2020

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the progress that has been made since the strategy was endorsed by Cabinet on 19th March 2020.

1.0 Background

This briefing paper is a six month update on The Nuneaton Education Strategy. Members are asked to note the progress that has been made since the strategy was endorsed by Cabinet on 19th March 2020.

2.0 NES meetings

The NES group is very well attended and membership grows continuously. There are currently 57 members drawn from a wide range of stakeholders (see appendix for list of membership). The group meets every half term and has continued to do so throughout the pandemic. The work of the group is organised into three strands.

3.0 Update on strands:

3.1 Strand 1: Best Possible Start

- The focus for the group is the '50 things to do before you are five' programme which is being developed based on a model from Bradford. The programme will be run via an App and the licensing has been agreed and purchased for the next two years. Local activities based in Nuneaton are being gathered and developed.
- During COVID19 restrictions '50 Things' activities were not suitable to meet social distancing rules. As an alternative Adult and Community Learning (ACL) developed simple activities to support home learning promoted on posters. They were very popular and rolled out across the county.
- Next steps are to complete a communications plan, arrange training workshops and a launch event. This will include an animation to raise awareness of the forthcoming '50 Things' project to be rolled out across social media.

- The financial sustainability of early years provision is an ongoing risk due to falling occupancy nationally (to 37%) and across Warwickshire from March 2020 - September 2020 due to Covid-19. Early years settings need to sustain +75% occupancy to be viable. The LA Business and Sufficiency Team are supporting marketing across Nuneaton to raise awareness of the free early years entitlement of 15 and 30 Hours. As the economic circumstances of families change, we are already seeing an increase in those applying for funded two-year old places which are dependent on receipt of benefits.

3.2 Strand 2 Empowering Schools

- Headteacher members of the subgroup have remained proactive despite the demands schools face managing the current pandemic situation. This has enabled the work of this strand to continue to move at pace.
- The Nuneaton Education Alliance has been established to offer professional development opportunities, school to school support and recruitment and retention initiatives. It is hoped this approach will reduce workload through shared CPD (continuing professional development), networking etc without schools feeling it has been imposed on them with schools working in partnership.
- A virtual launch of the Nuneaton Education Alliance took place on 6th October. Delegates included representatives from 29 of the 37 of schools and colleges in Nuneaton.
- A programme of CPD has been developed over the summer based on the training needs identified by the schools and which will make rapid and sustained impact. This will include CPD to support strategies for mental health, wellbeing and behaviour.
- The first CPD programme is on the Thrive approach (mental health, wellbeing and behaviour) took place on 1st October with 44 colleagues taking part from across 30 schools in Nuneaton.
- Further planned CPD includes Pie Corbett's Talk for Reading and Talk for Writing and Maths Mastery with the local West Midlands Maths Hub.
- A head teacher questionnaire was distributed to all Nuneaton Headteachers to gauge their views on the rewards and challenges of working in Nuneaton schools. The outcomes have been used to inform the work of this strand.
- At the beginning of the year WCC was approached by the EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) who, along with the Sutton Trust, are the government's preferred research partners. EEF proposed a focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged CYP and to jointly develop a project with Research Schools which would support disadvantaged pupils in Warwickshire. EEF identified 14 schools to support and with a large number of these in Nuneaton it was agreed the project would align with the Nuneaton Education Alliance. Discussions are now in place to develop this further.

- There is a further focus on recruitment and retention strategies which includes gathering good practice and effective models.
- A funded School Library Service project – ‘Great School Libraries’ – is taking place at Keresley Newland, Middlemarch and Nathaniel Newton primary schools with Michael Drayton taking a mentor role. The project is funded for the next 3 years with the aim of raising reading levels and supporting schools to run a library effectively, thus increasing reading opportunities.

3.3 Strand 3 Ready for Work and Life

- There has been a temporary lack of capacity to lead this strand, however WCC have recruited an Employability & Post 16 Lead who will start in post on 26/10/20 and will lead this strand. Where possible this strand is aligning its’ activities with the Nuneaton Transforming Programme.
- The group has discussed a Skills Passport for young people, next step is to take this forward with support from the secondary schools.
- Destinations have been looked at - 16-17 NEETs are low, next step is to look at post-19 destinations data.
- The group are working with the new Saints building which is offering programmes to develop skills and raise aspirations.
- The DWP Kick Start programme is for 16-24 year olds with employers providing a 6 month placement which is fully subsidised for 25 hours. The sub-group is being supported by the WCCs Business Skills Lead on sourcing local employers, with first jobs expected by the end of the month. The programme will roll out until December 2022 and will look to utilise the Apprenticeship levy.
- DWP are also establishing youth development hubs virtually across Warwickshire. They will provide access to support from various sector-based work academies made up of training providers and an end employer.
- A DWP schools adviser in Warwickshire is working on a pilot project for 18-19 year olds, testing virtual work experience opportunities.
- Next steps are for the sub-group to refocus in response to the impact of COVID19 and the resulting changing economic environment, looking at raising aspirations in the long-term, aligning work specifically with local careers leads and peer mentoring programmes.

- Transforming Nuneaton Partnership overlap:
 - A bid has been submitted to Manor Property Group for a Qdos Careers Hub to establish ground-breaking centre for impartial career guidance. If successful Manor Properties will fund the Qdos Career Hub for 2 years to support long-term sustainability.
 - Digital, skills and Innovation Centre: To re-locate NWSL College's commercial facing functions within the town centre. The project has 4 objectives: 1, provide a real commercial environment within which to train. 2, provide a digitally enabled space to teach new skills. 3, to provide incubation space with onsite support. 4. relocate the award winning NWSLC Catering and Hospitality Department and restaurant.

4.0 Golden thread strand: Vulnerable Learners and Transition

Each strand pays strong regard to the 'Vulnerable Learners and Transition' element which runs throughout the Nuneaton Education Strategy.

5.0 Nuneaton Education Strategy Recruitment Co-ordinator

As part of the WCC Transformation Programme a permanent full-time post to support the co-ordination of the work was agreed. The post is core funded and will sit in the School Improvement Team, Education Services. Thirteen applications were received. An appointment was made: the post holder currently works at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and will take up their new post in November. A full induction programme has been planned.

6.0 Summary/Conclusion

The Strategy board members continue to work at pace despite the current circumstances, demonstrating a significant passion to make a difference to the town of Nuneaton through successful delivery of this strategy.

Appendices

1. Appendix A - Membership of Nuneaton Education Strategy

Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: None