

**Paper 6 - for information/consideration**

## **School Exclusions and Alternative Provision Update**

### **Key Messages**

Forum members are asked to:

- Note the position with regards to children excluded from school and the need for radical change.
- Consider how schools or academy trusts may be able to work collaboratively with the wider sector and Sheffield City Council, to reduce rates of exclusion and help ensure that all children belong, thrive and achieve.

### **1. Introduction/background**

- 1.1. The rate of permanent exclusions from school at secondary is continuing to increase. There continues to be a significant unsustainable demand on Sheffield Inclusion Centre which presents an ongoing challenge.
- 1.2. There is a growing recognition that we need radical change to how we address this issue and ensure that all children belong, thrive and attain.
- 1.3. Linked to this, Learn Sheffield has been commissioned to undertake a review of alternative provision, which will complete in February. From this, a taskforce from across the sector will be established to take forward the recommendations. Alongside this, Sheffield City Council is considering how to respond rapidly to the challenges outlined and these responses will have some financial implications.
- 1.4. This paper outlines some of the rapid response actions being taken forwards. Further conversations will be had with MAT CEOs and at Heads Partnerships' meetings next term.

### **2. Schools Working Together to Prevent Exclusions**

- 2.1. As part of our rapid response, we are asking schools to consider how they might work with other schools to reduce the number of children whom they exclude from school and develop more inclusive practise. The Compass Network, which has been set up by Notre Dame School is already taking initiatives forward.
- 2.2. The network currently runs across six secondary schools in the south and west of the city and is looking at how it might expand to form another umbrella of schools across the east and the north of the city. Sheffield City Council is considering how it might facilitate this with the provision of behaviour and learning mentors.

- 2.3. Schools that have joined the network have been able to reduce the number of students they are suspending and excluding through programmes called REFLECT, REFRESH, and RESTART. These initiatives offer off-site direction as an alternative to suspension and behaviour intervention programmes. They also offer permanent managed moves to partner schools as an alternative to permanent exclusions for one-off incidents.

### **3. Provision for Children Excluded from School**

- 3.1. Given the high number of children being excluded from school, Sheffield City Council is also looking into the possibility of commissioning additional places in full-time alternative education provision, across different localities.
- 3.2. Forum members are asked to consider if schools or trusts may be able to partner with the Council in this provision and/or provide space for other partners to work from.
- 3.3. In addition to this, the Council is considering the potential for supporting schools with the reintegration of students who have been excluded from school. The Council is considering providing additional funding for these students, to make sure they can receive the additional support which they are likely to need, so that they can successfully settle into and belong in their new school.

### **4. Long-Term Thinking**

- 4.1. Further collaboration across the sector is needed to change the system.
- 4.2. We are considering the possibility of the devolution of some funding for alternative provision to schools or localities. Findings from a 2021 DfE report<sup>1</sup> show that devolving funding and decision-making autonomy to [partnerships of] schools can foster greater accountability, co-ordination and cost effectiveness whilst also reducing the number of children excluded from school.
- 4.3. There are a wide range of ways in which this can be done, and importantly, any system needs support from across the sector and a clear vision that works for the local context.
- 4.4. We are seeking a commitment to shared responsibility and system-wide working from trust leaders. There will be further opportunities to work with the local authority to help make decisions about what this vision should look like.

### **5. Summary**

- 5.1. Exclusions is an area of significant challenge, which can only be improved if we collaborate and take a different approach. This is not an issue unique to

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<sup>1</sup> UK Department for Education. Responsibility-based Models of Decision-making and Commissioning for Alternative Provision. June 2021. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk>

Sheffield and there is a challenging national context. However, as a Forum and partnership, there is opportunity for us to do more together.

- 5.2. Compass networks, devolved funding and locality based full time alternative provision are key developments under consideration.
- 5.3. There will be other ideas and solutions that have not yet been identified that need to be considered.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1. Forum members are asked to consider and come forward with any proposals they may have and work with us to improve Sheffield's provision and help ensure that all children belong, thrive and attain.