



Organising for Success

Local Committee for Woking 12 June 2003

KEY ISSUE:

A discussion document has been prepared by Dr. Paul Gray, Executive Director for Children and Young People, proposing strengthening collaborative working between schools and services for children, young people and their families. These proposals could change significantly the way in which County Services are provided in Woking.

SUMMARY:

The 'Organising for Success' document proposes that schools should voluntarily form collaborative networks which become the focal point for the development of education, health and well-being for children and young people in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Initial views on the issues raised within the discussion document were sought by 31 March 2003.

This report is therefore provided to the Local Committee for Woking for information but the views of the Local Committee can still be made known to Dr. Gray.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. The Education Act, 2002 gave some new freedoms to schools to form new collaborative structures ranging from joint committees to locally organised companies. Dr. Gray has considered how these freedoms could be used and published a discussion document entitled 'Organising for Success'. Copies of the full document (22 pages) are available from the Community Support Team.
2. In the document, Dr. Gray envisages that new collaborative structures – provisionally called 'Public Service Confederations' – would be concerned with the needs of their collective community in order to raise standards of achievement, community well being and protecting vulnerable children and young people. Confederations would enable schools to perform their existing roles better and become centres for community learning and other services. The effective joint working between bodies responsible for services to young people is central to addressing the major factors that prevent young people from achieving their potential.
3. The potential scope for confederations is described as:
 - a) Becoming centres of their communities, pooling resources to open up their facilities and expertise for community activities, community education including supporting parents to help in their children's learning, helping parents with their own education as well as hosting the more traditional adult education classes;
 - b) Raising achievement by supporting the members of confederations through shared in-service training, specialist teaching and mutual support in times of difficulty, promoting best practice, finding common solutions for children with exceptional needs or abilities and improved key stage liaison;
 - c) Working with other agencies in a way, which suit the confederation. Confederations could provide integrated services to children, young people and their families. Agencies such as health, the Police and Connexions may welcome a structure which they could engage with and make arrangements with locally;
 - d) Assisting children, young people and families to become more involved in the development of local strategies and in the design of services;
 - e) Provide opportunities for targeted early intervention with young people, families and communities that need additional support;
 - f) Achieve economies of scale in the provision of additional educational needs support.

4. The heart of the proposal is that schools voluntarily arrange themselves into collaborative networks, which have a formal structure and become the focal point for the development of education, health and well being for the children and young people in the area.
5. The discussion document refers to experiences of collaborative working within existing partnerships in Ash and Horley and the SHINE partnership.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

6. To children, young people and families.

- Focusing the total funds available across the confederations as a whole, the concentration and / or pooling of resources;
- Pupil inclusion – being jointly responsible for all pupils within the confederation;
- Higher levels of pupil achievement, increased pupil motivation and self-esteem;
- Improvements in child behaviour and social skills;
- Greater parental involvement in children's learning;
- More opportunities for local adult education and family learning;
- Greater availability for specialist support for families;
- Greater capacity for provision e.g. additional educational needs.

7. To schools

Schools may want to focus on some or all of the following types of issues and activities, or indeed may choose to concentrate on other issues not specified below. Schools are encouraged to be innovative and to create their own models, but it is likely that most confederations will involve some of the following types of activities:

- Sharing teachers and / or support;
- Sharing premises, equipment and / or specialist facilities;
- Moving gifted and talented children and other groups across schools;
- Allowing teachers to observe and learn from each other's lessons;
- Greater opportunities for flexible working and career development;
- Tackling racial equality and community cohesion;
- Enhanced partnership working with the community and better school security;
- Easier access to essential services for staff, helping staff recruitment and retention;
- Cost effectiveness and economies of scale;
- Developing joint programmes of research and development;

- Improved Additional Educational Needs provision;
- Tackling behaviour and exclusion;
- Support groups for staff at all levels to consult and share with colleagues.

8. To Communities

- More diverse activities that involve parents, community members and local groups, such as playgroups, sport clubs and voluntary organisations;
- A 'joined up' approach to local services by involving the local authority, local agencies and partnerships;
- Sustainable programmes where activities and services are not over-dependent on the skills and time of a few key staff;
- Opportunities for services that have a different ethos from school activities and present themselves as 'teacher-free' zones;
- Better access to essential services that require specialist skills, such as healthcare or social care;
- Improved local availability of sports, arts and other facilities;
- Development of greater community cohesion;
- Better supervision of children outside school hours;
- Closer relationships with their schools.

CHALLENGES TO GETTING THINGS RIGHT

9. Are schools ready for, or do they feel able to engage in, a high level of collaboration when league tables, pupil led funding and open enrolment make schools competitive? The proposal is to extend existing pilots and collaborative networks on a voluntary basis over an extended period of time. This will enable schools to see whether the benefits achieved by the early confederations outweigh the disadvantages.
10. Some schools – particularly denominational schools – service a wide area of Surrey. Two secondary schools have a national boarding enrolment. Some primary schools send children to several secondary schools in different areas. Special schools are countywide resources. Any collaborative network solution will have to be tailored to reflect these and the engagement of schools in confederations may be at differing levels.

11. Initially there will be more bureaucracy and more meetings. However, the 'change' agenda already expected of schools and services is very time-consuming and confederations may help this burden. At an operational level the everyday task of organising a school or a service should become a lot easier and a number of other meetings could be disbanded or reduced. The 'meeting burden' is a risk, which will need to be monitored carefully.
12. There would be upfront costs and the County Council can assist in setting up models for structures. The confederations would want to have a senior person to organise activities on its behalf. For its existing responsibilities the confederation should more than pay its way in the savings made in co-ordinating support services, purchasing services and materials etc. The confederation could employ specialists, directly avoiding the need for schools to hire staff who cannot realistically cover all the skills required. Some confederations will want to take on new challenges and responsibilities and exploit the funding opportunities.
13. The services that make up the County Council's Children & Young People Directorate would organise its staff around the confederations. Other agencies may also wish to co-ordinate their support to schools through confederations. This may cause initial challenges for those schools/communities, which are not included in a confederation, and for pupils who live outside of Surrey.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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