

Meeting: Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: October 19th 2005
Subject: Report on consultation to restructure the Achievement & Inclusion Division
Responsible Officer: Javed Khan, Director of Learning and Community Development
Contact Officer: Heather Clements
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Bill Stephenson
Key Decision: no

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

- None – this is an item for discussion

Reason for report

- To inform the committee of the consultation we are undertaking with schools about the next stage of restructuring in The Achievement and Inclusion Division

Benefits

- A new structure shaped to meet the needs of Harrow rather than just the National Agenda
- Innovative ways of working in and with schools
- Generating income outside Harrow
- Securing the best people
- Working in partnership with schools
- Ensuring we create a service that meets the needs of schools
- Creating a team that can be responsive and financially sustainable
- Retaining what we value
- Building on the expertise in schools to create new opportunities for heads

and teachers

Cost of Proposals

- It is anticipated that costs would be offset by income – up to August 2007 it is anticipated that this would come largely from the Standards Fund but as this is phased out we will need to ensure that we have a rigorous business plan including either a menu of buy back services or a service level agreement with schools.
- The estimated cost would be £250,000 per annum from 2007 if schools buy into a service level agreement. If they do not, the service size will be reduced in response to need.

Risks

- National agenda to reduce the role of Local Authorities
- Losing good people because of the relative insecurity
- Need to generate income to offset loss of standards fund
- Schools may not buy back service

Implications if recommendations rejected

- Losing good people because of the relative insecurity
- Failure to create a service that meets the needs of schools
- Failure to create a team that can be responsive and financially sustainable
- Failure to retain a service that schools value

Section 2: Report

Brief History

The School Development Service was reviewed in 2004 by an external consultant in response to national and local restructuring. As a result the service was restructured and renamed The Achievement and Inclusion Division. A new Head of Service took up post on April 1st 2005. Three principal advisers and 6 senior adviser posts were created – the existing team were assimilated into this structure and three further appointments were made. By July the first tier of the team was in place.

In September we began a short consultation with schools about the shape of the next tier of the service. We currently have 13 curriculum consultants and 3 curriculum advisers. The proposal is that we create 4-6 adviser posts to lead on the core curriculum and some key aspects of our work such as behaviour and PSHCE. These advisers would have substantive posts and be funded from base budget.

At the next level we would seek to deploy subject specialist advisers in partnership with other providers including the specialist colleges. A model we have piloted for PE where the adviser is jointly funded by Harrow and the specialist sports college and delivers their outreach programme as well as co-ordinating the sports co-ordinator programme on behalf of the authority. In line with the National Agenda to utilise school based practitioners we would also seek to identify excellent teachers in our schools who would carry out action research and be available to support colleagues from time to time – these would be paid a small retainer and their work with other schools would be by negotiation between schools.

We currently have a growing number of Advanced Skills Teachers – ASTs – who are paid an enhanced salary and who are available for a day a week to support to colleagues. These teachers have been particularly useful in developing practice in the classroom and we would hope to continue with these posts in the future.

The final tier in the structure would be to identify experienced and successful Headteachers in Harrow who could act as mentors to new heads or heads experiencing difficulty or who could stand in at short notice in the event of school being without a Headteacher.

We know that the Standards Fund which pays for a significant proportion of these posts at present will be phased out over time – initially this was thought to be from August 2006 and most are on temporary contracts until that date, however it seems likely that the majority of this funding will be retained at least until 2007 so we have an opportunity to build up a new relationship with schools and develop a service level agreement or buy back system which will sustain the provision of support in the future.

Overall we believe that the service is valued by schools and contributes to the high standards enjoyed in our schools. We therefore want to preserve and strengthen what is best about the service and improve on any aspects that are less successful.

Options considered

Not changing and allowing the service to diminish over time as people left and we were unable to recruit to short term fixed contracts

Not providing curriculum support once the Standards Fund declined leaving schools to seek advice and support from consultants and specialists outside Harrow leading to lack of continuity and opportunities for shared working

Moving to a fully traded service where schools chose the advice and support they wanted – risking schools not seeking support or getting poor advice leading to reduction in standards and potentially more schools going into Ofsted categories

Consultation

The consultation is currently with headteachers and has been sent to the Chairs' Forum for their views

Financial Implications

A business plan would need to be put in place to ensure that the traded services were viable and that costs did not exceed existing funding as the standards Fund is phased out.

Legal Implications

Not known

Equalities Impact

A medium sized financially viable service would create equal opportunity for all schools and therefore all pupils to access appropriate advice and support. Support from the service should always be in inverse proportion to success – without the support of local authority advisers the weakest schools would be those least likely to afford external consultants and those without the capacity to deal with external agencies or network with other schools

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Proposed Structure Chart

Letter to Headteachers re-consultation