

Developing a Sheffield Strategic Partnership

Friday 14 July 2023, 2.30-4.30pm

Learn Sheffield Meeting Room

Attendees: Stephen Betts, Jonathan Crossley Holland (chair), Shelly Appleby, Bev Matthews, Nicola Shipman, Linda Gooden, Julia Delaney, Martin Fallon, Martin Finch, Dean Webster, Roland Freeman, Andrew Jones, Thomas Edmonds (notes)

Apologies: Chris French, Linda Joseph, Angela Foulkes, Mark Fairbrother, Fiona Rigby

Introductions

JCH welcomed all to the meeting and introductions took place.

Simon Day from ISOS will be working with Sheffield on this partnership and is at the meeting. He has worked on pilots across the country from other Local Authorities and will share and feed these into discussions where helpful.

Purpose of the partnership

The purpose of this group is to consider the setting up of a school led strategic education partnership which can:

- Develop a shared strategy and ways of working for system leadership at the city level.
- Strengthen action on selected priority areas which have widespread support.

This has the potential to provide the city with an important opportunity to map these priorities and to look to avoid any fragmentation.

The opportunities that a strong partnership offers – Jonathan Crossley-Holland (see attached slides)

JCH shared with the group the key points on why collaborative based approaches build strong school systems.

- Collaboration at local level provides the glue and can bring different agencies together.
- Identity and place matter.
- Relationships and collaboration are as important as data.
- Each locality's challenges and opportunities are different.
- Local solutions are often more cost effective.
- Locality-based approaches can generate sustainable local capacity.

Capacity will be key to this partnership working and this needs to tackle any fragmentation in the system to ensure that the city is working together to achieve any common goals. By having a successful partnership, it will enable high profile city wide focus on key priorities. The priorities would be determined by a Sheffield strategic partnership and this group provides a platform to consider this vehicle.

Useful lessons from other strategic partnerships – Simon Day (see attached slides)

SD shared lessons from other partnerships. He has supported 9 Pilot Areas and work with other local areas over the last 10 years. There are different approaches to this work, and this depends on the approach taken and the priorities that are to be addressed.

SD shared case studies from East Sussex, Portsmouth and Wakefield. See summary below of work in each of the areas:

- **East Sussex** Secondary and Primary Board – lessons about leadership from the LA, the role of an Independent Chair, the importance of communications and widening the range of voices.
- **Wakefield** Integrated Education Partnership – lessons about the power of having people in one room, how to avoid becoming a talking shop, needing to be more operational to be strategic.
- **Portsmouth** Education Partnership – lessons about burning platform, clarity of LA role, building capacity for SI, coalition of the willing, organic development combined with quick wins.

SD discussed with the group nine conditions to consider when looking to set up effective partnership work.

1. A clear and compelling vision for the local school improvement system.
2. Trust and high social capital between schools, the local authority, and partners.
3. Strong engagement from the majority of schools and academies.
4. Leadership from key system leaders.
5. A crucial empowering and facilitative role for the local authority.
6. Sufficient capacity for school-to-school support.
7. Effective links with regional partners.
8. Sufficient financial contributions (from schools and the local authority).
9. Structures to enable partnership activity.

SD outlined other things to consider as a group: Leadership, Membership, Role of the Group, Resources, Capacity and Communications.

SD agreed to circulate his slides to the group.

Expectations and possible contributions

JCH asked the group for their expectations and contributions to the partnership and what colleagues thought this could look like moving forwards. The area below were suggested by colleagues and would help form a strong partnership:

- Visiting other schools in the city to identify and share best practice. This would in turn develop stronger relationships.
- Incorporate strategies for sharing good practice involving a wider range of partners but not exclusively to schools. It is important that all are pulling in the same directions with a common drive to improve.
- There is a need for strong strategies with an inclusivity to serve a diverse city. As a city we are still polarised, and we don't always know that students are getting the best deal. Sharing best practice would come in to play here. Barriers need to be looked at that hinder progress and look to remove these barriers collectively.
- It is important and key to learn from other schools with similar context.
- There is a real sense of urgency and links need to be made to ensure there is buy in from services across the city to speed up work with key partners. There needs to be representation on this group from across the city and across all sectors from PVI through the universities. This along with the correct service involvement will help to push things forward as a lot of the help and support required for families is wider than school.
- There needs to be a clear vision and purpose to the work and a decision needs to be made on the direction of this journey before the work starts. We need to move away from competition. We need a shift to collaborate to improve the city as a whole and need links to the police and NHS to get involvement from appropriate services.
- Parent and pupil voice needs to be included in this work to ensure that there is impact.
- There is a need to ensure there is fair representation across schools/academies in the city, ensuring that there is wider representation from maintained schools. All Sheffield heads need to have the opportunity to contribute towards this and this needs to be shared wider with everyone given a voice. This can be achieved in part by connecting this work to the existing city infrastructure.

It was agreed that there needs to be further information shared with colleagues across the city before any decisions can be taken about the key focus of the work as we do not want to have any outliers from the outset. The only decision that will be made from the meeting here is if there is an appetite from colleagues in the city to push forwards with this.

SB intends to write a paper to provide a Learn Sheffield perspective on this piece of work. The potential purpose of this work is to create a collective ownership and shared understanding of priorities owned by key stakeholders. The group need to pick priorities smartly, to identify those which can be resolved through partnership at this level. They need to be issues where our resources have chance to have an impact. This needs to build on the partnership structure in place and look at how to improve the partnership infrastructure across the city.

The Educating for the Future Pilot is producing thinking and tools that could be useful in this conversation. This will be in terms of accessing and understanding how children, young people and families experience education and it would be helpful to feed this to wider discussions.

AJ explained that from a SCC perspective he is here to support this development and initiative. No decisions here and need to work out where we go next and how we create a coalition and momentum. There is a clear will now amongst professional and political colleagues to support this as a piece of work.

SCC bring statutory duties and a willingness and interest to engage with school leaders about how these duties are discharged.

AJ added that the group needs to be careful when defining partners and there is a need to ensure that there is meaningful representation. Sheffield College and the Universities need to be included along with wider engagement with all sectors across the city.

The Local Authority is committed to this work and has therefore committed funding to support the initial administrative support for this piece of work.

What principles and values should we propose. This would be designed to be an initial discussion with a follow up at the next meeting when colleagues had time to reflect.

The main vision and value from all which is coming out of discussions today is about feeling a joint responsibility to support all children and young people across the city. As a group we need steps to open up the relationships between schools/academies to share best practice and support and develop this culture.

The areas of SEND and Attendance have been raised by a number of colleagues and could be areas of focus.

As a collective we need to ensure that there is an understanding of colleagues across the city across all sectors in education along with colleagues working in key services as partners. There is a need as a city to decide on the key priorities and build out a representative group from this of colleagues interested in this project.

JCH agreed to summarise the key points from today's meeting into a briefing note that can be shared out to colleagues across the city in September. Careful consideration will be taken to ensure that there is fair representation, and this will be shared more widely with established partnership groups in the city as well as to wider partners and organisations.

JCH closed the meeting by explaining that he is here to help the partnership be launched and the group would then probably look to appoint an independent chair if the partnership is established.

Date and time of next meeting

Details of the next meeting and the briefing paper will be shared with colleagues in the autumn term.