

Frequently Asked Questions

What's the case for change behind this new approach and model?

Improving outcomes for children and families in Lancashire is the motivation behind these changes. Whilst outcomes for the majority of Lancashire children are good, outcomes for some children, particularly in vulnerable groups, are not always what they should be. We want schools and agencies to work better together to bring about the improvements required for all children, young people and families to be safe, healthy and achieve their potential.

We want them to do this through clear and transparent decision making and resource allocation. This does not happen currently in Lancashire. There is no Education Strategy on which to base the decision making and resource allocation. There is no appropriate governance structure which facilitates this process. We aim to develop this, with the support of system leaders, through the development of school networks which will feed into 5 Locality Boards, overseen by a Lancashire Education Partnership Board (LEPB).

There is political and corporate understanding of the case for change and support for the new model.

What are the timescales for introducing this new approach?

The intention is that networks will be established, partnership boards in place and the full system ready for implementation for the start of the Autumn Term 2020.

Is the new model a plan from the start to wind down the advisory service?

This model is not driven by that vision. The SSG is remaining. The advisory team will work with schools and their networks to bring about better outcomes for children in their area. The advisors are keen for outcomes to improve and to be part of supporting that endeavour with their schools and colleagues in other agencies.

As the vision centres on improving outcomes for children in Lancashire the work of the advisory service outside of the LA will cease from April 2020. This ensures energies are directed on engaging with the system led model in Lancashire.

Associate advisory support will cease in April 2020 in order to focus on the SSG offer from the core team of advisors.

A new model for the delivery of the SSG will be in place for the Autumn Term 2020, so schools have been invited to buy into the current model just for the Summer Term while the new model is finalised. Schools will be provided with details of the revised SSG model and invited to subscribe as early as possible in the Summer Term.

In time the SSG will flex as the system led model is in action but no decisions have been made.

This feels like an academy structure by a different name.

The approach is based on greater collaboration of schools and settings with multi agency teams. It is not based on a Trust model. In fact, where this model has been developed elsewhere it has often had the opposite effect, resulting in a stall in academy and Trust applications. Greater collaboration and resource allocation being facilitated through the model.

However, this new model does bring academies and Trusts into the visible Lancashire education landscape. As the approach is intentionally status neutral it means that schools serving Lancashire's children and families are all part of the model. The Regional Schools Commissioner supports this approach and will be represented at LEPB and Locality Board level where impact will be measured and where decision making and resource allocation will be agreed.

How do we know this will work? Is there evidence this model works elsewhere?

There is compelling evidence this model works elsewhere, such as Wigan, Cumbria, Blackburn with Darwen, Buckinghamshire. There are local and national examples. Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned ISOS Partnership to produce a report which highlights examples and provides 9 conditions for developing a system led approach. This has been distributed on the portal but the link is attached here.

ENABLING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT - Research into the role of local authorities in supporting local school improvement systems

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LGA%20SI%20report%20FINAL%20Jan%202018.pdf>

Whilst there are some helpful recommendations on developing system leader models the report does urge co-design of the model with leaders in the system. For this reason, a task and finish Steering Group of representatives has been established, via expressions of interest.

Once we implement our Lancashire network model, we can refine and adjust it over time in order to maximise its effectiveness.

The model seems bureaucratic; why are there so many different layers involved?

Fundamentally, the model is designed with just three layers of operation: 1. the school networks allow school leaders to agree local priorities, to confirm underlying factors and to propose practical approaches; 2. The Locality Boards that work to co-ordinate and oversee the activity across a wider area, informing local deployment of resources and the sharing of support and effective practice, and; 3. The overarching Education Partnership Board that is able to co-ordinate, deploy and draw in

resources across the county to address agreed priorities that improve provision and outcomes for children and young people.

Why do we need new networks? Does this mean the end for existing networks and partnerships?

The new networks are specifically designed to provide a framework for two-way communication between schools and local authority services in a small geographical locality. It will provide a vehicle for sharing effective practice and collaborating to address common issues, but is NOT intended to be the only way in which schools will collaborate. It is up to schools to determine which networks and collaborative working arrangements best meet their needs and there is nothing proposed which will prevent existing arrangements.

Could we invite HTs from other LAs/HTs colleagues so that we can hear it from them and learn from their experiences so that we can get this right for Lancashire children?

Of course. This was considered for the January events but may have been interpreted as imposing a model from elsewhere. However, learning from others is key in the change process and developing the right approach for Lancashire. There will be opportunities after half term to share practice from HTs engaged in this work in other areas. There will also be an opportunity to consider the regional data in order to understand which LAs are improving outcomes the most. The Steering Group will use the information to help shape the Lancashire approach. Invitation will be extended to those wanting to hear about how it works elsewhere.

We work in a system driven by competition. How have other LAs addressed schools in competition with each other?

This will be covered in greater detail at the events where practice and models are shared.

Evidence shows that system led models won't eliminate competition entirely, but they do bring incentives for collaboration in a systematic way. There are specific examples of where collaboration has drawn down DfE funding directly to groups of schools. Place based approaches are also being successful in drawing down additional government grants.

Holding each other to account. How will that work?

Schools and settings are accountable first and foremost to their local governing body. Delivering great outcomes for children in their own organisation is the focus for their efforts. This is enhanced in a system led approach when schools look wider than their own school to contribute and share practice and learn from others. In this way

the collaborative endeavour is directed at greater numbers of children. The system holds each other to account for better outcomes for more children. There is transparency about resource allocation and an emphasis on 'so what?' If resource is spent and no difference is made then we hold each other to account and change the allocation and activity. .

Who will decide which HT will sit on the Locality Boards?

This is likely to be through nomination within the network. However, the Steering Group will determine the detail of the process. The development of the networks and Locality Board in the East will provide an opportunity to check this process out

Is there funding linked to this new approach? Will there be a pot of money for each cluster?

There is work currently underway to review funding and budget allocations to facilitate this model. This will be transparent and schools will have greater decision-making powers about resource allocation. Through the model there will be more localised decision making and allocations based on need and priorities. Resource will include human resource as well as assets, and funding. Moreover, it will align resource from other agencies to maximise the support available. Where system led models exist, more external funding has been drawn down to support improved outcomes for children and families.

Is this just another cost-cutting exercise?

It is true that the local authority has needed to identify further savings and that this has been reflected in a review of services across the board. Where resources are limited, however, it is even more important that these are used to best effect, to address the greatest need; the proposed networks are intended to make best use of the available resource to the greatest effect, informed by the intelligence brought to the networks by school leaders.

Will schools' SSG money be used to subsidise the networks? Will the cost of the SSG reduce if the offer is reduced?

No, to both questions. The fact is that, in recent years, local authority funding has effectively been used to subsidise the SSG. Under the new model, school advisers will continue to provide an SSG, but some of the time of senior advisers will be needed to facilitate the school networks, with their time effectively being funded by the local authority. The SSG work of school advisers will need to be fully covered by the SSG income.

The LEPB seems very education driven? What about other agencies, particularly Health?

The membership is in outline form only and will be shaped by the Steering Group. The Executive Director as Chair of the LEPB will support this work and will represent

a wide range of agencies through her extensive remit. The Lancashire Education Partnership Board will report directly to the Children, Young People and Families Board where the Director of Public Health and other Strategic Directors sit. It will be a clear line for escalation of issues to senior level.

Will the data profile be more reflective of other information than education outcomes?

Yes, the feedback from the events is shaping new network profiles. The Steering Group will help shape these. The profiles for the East will be in place for April 2020.

How will confidentiality be maintained where needed?

Schools will need to commit to a data-sharing agreement (extending a model already in place for all secondary schools) and protocols adhered to with regard to the use of confidential data.

Is it not better to tackle the underlying issues?

That is exactly the purpose of the networks. If data identify a key area of underperformance or concern, the local intelligence from school leaders and other services can be used to explore the underlying factors and ways in which collaborative, cross-sector, cross-phase, multi-agency working can be used to tackle these.

Will there be an opportunity to share expertise across areas, not limited by the localities? How will you ensure consistency within and between localities?

This will be an expectation of the model and will be facilitated by the LEPB and system leaders in five Locality Boards. Senior advisers will be working with five networks of headteachers and will work across the LA to ensure those connections are made and to ensure consistency of operation, whilst allowing for flexibility to reflect differing local contexts.

How will special schools fit in to the model? Where is the support for special schools?

Planning is currently underway with colleagues to consider how this works best for special schools. There is an understanding the network will need to link with national best practice to provide the level of support to improve outcomes. There are examples of this which will be shared. Clearly there is also incentive for special schools to work with other agencies to ensure more Lancashire children are placed within Lancashire. This would release valuable resource to be re-invested back into Lancashire provision.

Why should I get involved in this model? What happens to schools that opt out?

In Lancashire we all recognise the importance of improving outcomes for children, young people and families. The model offers opportunities at all levels to strengthen that endeavour and be engaged in sharing practice and accessing resource from multi- agency partners and external organisations. It will provide schools and local areas with greater involvement in decision making and resource allocation. It will also provide an infrastructure of governance which will help influence and shape future national policy as it arrives. Without a direct infrastructure there is no way to influence policy directives which come our way.

Schools that do not engage with the model will not be able to influence the decisions made about how resources are used, and will risk missing out on key information and resources.

How will school governors be involved? Will governors be represented on any of the boards?

School governors will continue to challenge, support and monitor the activity and impact of school leadership teams. They will be able to ensure their own school's engagement in the new system, and monitor the impact of any activity undertaken through the networks. It might be that governors across a school network might wish to work together, as other school leaders will be doing, in order to share effective practice and agree common approaches.

The outline membership of the Lancashire Education Partnership Board includes governor representation. The steering group will advise on the possibility of governor involvement in locality boards as the model is developed.

How is this going to impact on Headteachers' time and wellbeing?

The intention is not to have frequent meetings of full networks which would overburden headteachers. Rather, once priorities for the networks are identified and agreed locally, then schools should be *more* confident that the issues that concern them the most, and that currently demand significant investment of time and effort in order to access support are being addressed *more* effectively, and this ought to improve wellbeing.

Surely the model outlined will rely on the local authority having sufficient resources to meet need?

This is true. The infrastructure of networks and the overarching Locality Boards and Partnership Board are designed to ensure more effective communication between school leaders and the senior colleagues in the local authority and beyond, who have control over the resources available. As such, a key purpose of the new model is to ensure that resources are better controlled and managed in order to address agreed priorities.

Are other local authority services on board?

Not only are the senior colleagues with oversight of the wider children's services represented by the Director on the Partnership Board, existing services are being re-structured to align with the same locality 'footprints' to facilitate the necessary ways of working.

Protocols and data-sharing will need to be aligned to facilitate effective cross-authority working.

How will communication be managed? Will there be a Portal for Governors?

At present, a website is being established to provide a vehicle for sharing information and updates about the development and implementation of the model; the aim will be to post updates at least once every two weeks. There is no intention to restrict access to this site, so governors would be free to access the same information that is available to any interested party.

How and when will you measure the success of the model? By what outcomes?

Local priorities will be identified in large part by considering the outcomes against which we are held to account nationally, such as exam and test results, exclusion information, NEET figures, attendance information, etc. The success of the model will be measured by the extent to which priority measures show improvement, as well as wider evidence such as improved collaborative, cross-phase networking.

What if this doesn't work?

If we are to ensure better provision and outcomes for our most vulnerable children and families, schools and the local authority need to work together to make the system work. The effectiveness of working arrangements and the impact of activity will be subject to ongoing monitoring through the three tiers of the structure, in both directions, and arrangements will need to be modified and refined in response to evidence over time; in the same way that any school will monitor its own structures, systems and school improvement processes.