

LANCASHIRE "NEW RELATIONSHIP" UPDATE #01

2nd March 2020

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/practitioners/supporting-children-and-families/education/system-led-school-improvement-model/>

Improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children and schools
Strengthening joined-up working between Lancashire services, schools and others – improving transparency and reducing isolation
Improving awareness of and access to the available local, regional and national resources and effective practice

NEWS

1. A new **website** has been developed (hyperlink above) to provide a "one stop shop" for information and updates; once live, this website will be further developed as a conduit for communication as the networks get underway.
2. **Briefings** for headteachers and for chairs of governors have now been completed and the concerns raised by these are addressed in a "**Frequently Asked Questions**" document, initially circulated via the Schools Portal and now being updated periodically on the new website.
A "**vision**" document has been drafted to accompany the FAQs to illustrate how the networks might work in practice.
3. Three groups are now in place to shape the implementation of the new system across the county (**Steering Group**), across LA services (**Project Group**) and for early-implementation through two networks in the East (**East Implementation Group**). A schedule of meetings is in place and all of the groups have now held their inaugural meetings.
The 'county-wide' Steering Group includes representatives from different phases and partners; membership is detailed on the website. The East Implementation Group has helped to shape the remit and protocols for joint working, and are now starting the process of planning for the engagement of all schools in the two networks.

The membership of **30 local networks** has been established, informed by feedback from headteachers. These are attached as the starting point for implementation of the new model.

MYTHBUSTING

Let's tackle three "hot topics" head-on:

1. Why is Lancashire closing down the advisory service and the SSG?

- We are NOT stopping the SSG or closing down the advisory service.
- Currently, the biggest threat to the future of the SSG is where schools decide to cancel their subscriptions, or if talented school leaders don't come forward to fill adviser posts when advertised.

... but Lancashire is getting rid of advisers...

- Like many headteachers up and down the country have had to do, there continues to be a need for the council to reorganise services and staffing in order to make financial savings.
- As a part of this, the decision has been made to concentrate our work exclusively within Lancashire, and to protect the core team of permanent advisers, which has regrettably meant losing a number of experienced and valued colleagues on associate or casual contracts.
- Some advisers will retire or move to other jobs, which is a normal occurrence.

... but I will be losing my adviser who I trust and who knows our school well...

- It is not unusual for there to be a change in adviser; when this happens, we review and redeploy the existing workforce and, when needed for our staffing structure, we recruit new colleagues with appropriate experience and skills and work to ensure consistent quality across the advisory teams. Admittedly, the scale of the changes we need to make means that this is currently more widespread than under normal circumstances.
- Experience suggests it is rare for *any* school to welcome a change in their adviser, as headteachers and governors in *every* SSG school tend to hold their own school adviser in high regard – logic therefore suggests that if a change in adviser is needed, the new adviser assigned to the school will be of similar high quality and with a common philosophy and approach.
- Whilst change can be unsettling and unpleasant, a fresh pair of eyes supporting a school can bring new insights and a slightly different perspective to bear, as often happens when a headteacher changes.

... why does my adviser have to change because of the network I have been placed in?

- This is NOT the case. There is no intention that every school in a network has to have the same adviser. There is no intention to change existing adviser allocations other than where colleagues are leaving or have different roles in the new structure.

... but schools can only subscribe to the SSG for one term, so there is no support in the autumn...

- There is NO intention to cease the SSG, but the changes in adviser staffing mean that teams are currently working to develop a new model for the SSG.
- There will therefore be a different SSG model in place from September 1st, so we felt it was not fair to schools to subscribe to the full year of an SSG that will change after one term.
- As soon as a new SSG model is worked out, we will contact schools to ask for sign-up for the remainder of the year.
- Because of the changes to the number of advisers, and the need for senior advisers to facilitate our new school networks, we expect there to be a reduction in the number of SSG days in order to allow each adviser to work with more schools, but termly visits WILL be part of the new model and adviser teams are exploring ways to reduce the 'paperwork' associated with the SSG in order to maximise the face-to-face support from advisers in schools. To be clear, the money schools pay towards the SSG will be used for the SSG and will NOT be 'top sliced' to fund the networks.

... but I am a headteacher who is losing the opportunity to work as an associate (to develop my own skillset and to contribute more widely to the service)...

- The advisory service will continue to need to draw upon headteachers in order to enhance our capacity to meet schools' needs; and with each adviser working with an increased allocation of schools, there may even be a need for *increased* support from serving headteachers.

2. Why can't I carry on working in my existing strong and successful local network?

- You can – the new networks are NOT intended to replace any effective collaboration and partnership working that already exist. In fact, the hope is that the work of the new networks will dovetail with, complement and possibly strengthen existing effective practice.

... but why have I been put into a network with schools I don't usually work with...

- The proposed networks were drafted to provide a conduit for a manageable number of schools within a local area to engage with local services.
- The five defined areas were chosen to align with Public Health "footprints".
- We need to ensure cross-phase working in order to benefit from successful practice in different phases, and to reduce the risk that underlying issues are seen as someone else's business.

... but how do we know this is going to work? ...what if it doesn't?

- The identification of individual schools within different networks provides a starting point – we need to start somewhere. The intention has always been that these will evolve over time in order to achieve the best fit for each local area.

- If everyone can commit to the headline purpose of the groups (as set out at the top of this update), is willing to give it a go and is determined to make their own network succeed, suggesting refinements and improvements as we go along, then between us we *will* make it work. We have to if we are ever going to do the right thing by our most vulnerable children and schools.

3. Why is the local authority trying to shift the responsibility for holding schools to account onto schools themselves?

- This is NOT what we are seeking to do. There is no plan for the Local Boards to 'haul' headteachers to hearings to make them answer for their shortcomings (as has been 'doing the rounds'!)
- As organisations that are publicly funded through taxpayers' money, we all share a collective accountability (and a desire) to ensure all children get a good deal from the education system locally; and are held accountable by Ofsted for this. We all have our own funding streams and will continue to be held accountable by our own governors to ensure this is efficiently and effectively used.
- Local networks will work to identify and agree local priorities, to explore the underlying issues that lead to these priorities, and to try to tackle them through collaborative working; this will be facilitated by drawing in local support and resources from the local authority, schools, MATs and the wider system. **The networks will be accountable for making sure these resources are used as intended**, bringing about improvement against agreed priorities and the headline measures that identified them in the first place.

... but how will we make sure every school takes part?

- We cannot compel anyone to engage with the new arrangements; this is the case with other networks that already exist, where some schools engage and others choose not to.
- We will work with school leaders to make the networks into something that is of value to them; providing an infrastructure to tackle common issues together, to access available resources and to share effective practice.
- We sincerely hope that schools would wish to be an active part of this arrangement, whether they are a net provider or a net receiver of support; indeed, schools involved in providing school to school support have long argued the benefits their own schools accrue through this work.

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Drafted on behalf of the Lancashire Steering Group

If you has any further questions about the information in this update, please contact Paul at paul.dyson-knight@lancashire.gov.uk so these can be fed back to the Steering Group and addressed through future editions