















































































































































































## Part 4: Supporting vulnerable children

### Current issues and challenges

An important observation that emanates from local authorities' self-evaluations, is that overall authorities appear to be less confident that, together with schools, they will continue to be able to offer good quality support for the most vulnerable children than they are in their capacity to establish a strategic direction, ensure a sufficient supply of school places or contribute to school improvement.

A number of anxieties are fuelling this overall perception. Some local authorities are experiencing a sharp rise in the special educational needs of children and young people, associated with more advanced medical treatment for life-threatening conditions and more effective diagnosis of other educational needs. This is combined in some areas with high levels of mobility, particularly among children of asylum seeking families and families moving as a result of economic pressures, which puts children at risk of not achieving their potential. These contextual issues are compounding some of the challenges which local authorities are experiencing in meeting the needs of vulnerable children in a more diverse and devolved education system. These broadly relate to two main areas of activity– the first is securing a good quality school place for every vulnerable child and the second is how to ensure every vulnerable child receives the best possible combination of services and support to enable them to succeed.

### Securing a good quality school place for every vulnerable child

Meeting the needs of all the vulnerable children in a community requires schools not only to be effective individually, but also to come together collectively. In particular, ensuring that every vulnerable child or young person has a school place that meets his or her needs, and taking collective responsibility for the education of children at risk of exclusion are issues that require schools to collaborate effectively in the interests of children with the greatest educational needs. Local authorities retain important responsibilities to manage Fair Access Protocols for the benefit of hard to place children, and ensure the provision of full-time education for pupils excluded from school. This is therefore an area in which the local authority's ability to successfully support, enable and, in some cases, persuade schools to take decisions which are for the collective good is of paramount importance.

The interim report found that, in general, in those areas where Fair Access Protocols were seen as objective, fair and transparent schools were continuing to engage with them well. In these areas headteachers of both academies and local authority maintained schools saw the Fair Access Partnership as an important element in the effective functioning of the broader education system. However, where Fair Access had not historically been administered successfully schools had been swift to disengage from the process.

As the action research has progressed there is some increased anxiety among local authorities as to whether Fair Access arrangements will continue to hold strong even in those areas where they have historically been effective. Three out of eight local authorities, in their self-evaluations, disagreed

with the statement *“Relationships with and between schools and the established processes are strong enough that Fair Access arrangements are likely to continue to work as more schools become autonomous.”* There is a fear among some local authorities that the climate of increased autonomy could lead to individual schools deciding to ‘opt out’ of taking their fair share of students who face multiple challenges and are consequently hard to place. Some local authorities also reflected that the increased pressure of forced academisation for schools at or near the floor target increased their reluctance to accept pupils who might have a negative impact on the school’s results. There has perhaps been a perception, traditionally, that Fair Access has been a more challenging issue at secondary than at primary. However, the experience of the local authorities taking part in this research suggests that it can be an issue at either phase, or both, depending on the context locally and the relationships with and between headteachers. Some local authorities are also concerned about the new admissions code which removes the responsibility for local authorities to coordinate in-year admissions. The anxiety among some authorities is that, without an overall coordinating structure, at-risk children may slip through the net.

A further complicating issue to ensuring that all vulnerable children have a suitable education place, which has been raised by local authorities taking part in the research, is the speed and effectiveness with which disagreements with academies about in-year admissions of hard to place vulnerable children are resolved when escalated to the Education Funding Agency. In the self-evaluation returns, three out of eight local authorities disagreed with the statement that *“In the event of a dispute between schools which involves an academy, or between the local authority and an academy, in relation to in-year admissions for hard to place children we know what the escalation mechanism is and we are confident that we can make it work and resolve the issue in a timely fashion.”* Given the highly vulnerable nature of these children it is imperative that these escalation mechanisms are able to deliver decisions quickly so that children’s educational needs are met without delay.

However, it is important to understand that, on the basis of the action research evidence, the issue of whether schools engage effectively in Fair Access arrangements appears to have more to do with the individual motivations of headteachers and governors, and their commitment to principles of inclusion, than it has to do with whether a school is an academy or a local authority school. Many local authorities have pointed to academies which routinely take more than their fair share of hard to place pupils because they believe that it is the right thing to do. Furthermore, evidence gathered from headteachers engaged in the action research suggests that schools clearly recognise the need to have transparent and objective Fair Access arrangements that work well and to which all schools are committed, and that the way local authorities approach the task of convening Fair Access Partnerships can have a critical role in supporting their future success.

### **Securing the right combination of support and services that enable every vulnerable child to succeed**

A second key aspect of meeting the needs of vulnerable children is how the range of bespoke services, both in school and beyond, are constructed to support an individual child and their family. Traditionally many of these services, such as education welfare, behaviour support, or education psychology, have been provided free at the point of need by local authorities and funded by money retained centrally. As more schools become academies and previously centrally retained funding is



devolved, non-statutory aspects of these services are increasingly being moved onto a traded basis and schools are being given the freedom to commission the nature and scale of support that best meets the needs of their pupils. The potential benefits of schools more closely tailoring the support available to the specific needs of the pupils, and using the funding imaginatively to release in-house capacity to support pupils, are great. But there are also attendant risks and challenges which the action research has identified.

A particular concern expressed by local authorities is what the redistribution of the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) will mean in practice for the most vulnerable children and young people.<sup>4</sup> Historically, the effect of retaining money centrally in order to fund services for high-needs children meant that, within an individual authority, schools with fewer vulnerable pupils were essentially investing in provision that would mainly support those schools with higher levels of vulnerable children and young people. With the devolution of LACSEG funding this redistribution has been evened out. The pupil premium and other weighted factors within local funding formulae provide opportunities to ensure that schools with more challenging intakes are resourced accordingly. However, until the full implications of the redistribution of funding are understood it remains to be seen what impact this will have on the totality of support that is provided or commissioned for the most vulnerable children.

In contrast to local authorities' confidence that schools have the knowledge and capacity to successfully commission services to support school improvement, they feel less confident that schools are able to commission services to support the most vulnerable pupils. The completed self-evaluations revealed that around half the local authorities did not believe that converter academies or primary schools have the skills, confidence and capacity to commission high quality support for vulnerable children, and three out of eight did not believe that secondary schools or sponsored academies had these skills either. At the same time local authorities were also less confident in the quality of the services for vulnerable children that they made available to schools on a traded basis than they were about the quality of their school improvement support and in their understanding of the market. Some local authorities do not believe that core traded services for vulnerable children (such as behaviour services or support for children with English as an additional language or from Black and Minority Ethnic communities) will continue to be viable in the short to medium term, which means they will be discontinued. This may leave a gap in support, if other providers are not able to quickly compensate for the local authority provision that might be lost.

The extent to which this concern is borne out by evidence provided by headteachers is mixed. Certainly there were many headteachers who engaged in the research who personally felt extremely confident to commission the right support for their vulnerable pupils and for some the ability to do so was one of the key influencing factors in their decision to become an academy. There was also a strong feeling among some heads that the idea of schools or groups of schools collaborating to make their own provision for support services for vulnerable children was potentially very powerful. However, there is also evidence that the range of services available for vulnerable children may not be as strong as the range of providers for school improvement support and this may limit the

---

<sup>4</sup> Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) is paid to academies in recognition of the fact that as independent schools they no longer receive a number of services from local authorities. It is calculated by taking relevant central expenditure data for each local authority from both the Schools Budget and the LA Budget, and dividing it by the relevant number of pupils to obtain a per-pupil figure.

effectiveness of schools as commissioners. In one local authority headteachers expressed the view that there was a very narrow range of services available for vulnerable children and that the market in support services was underdeveloped. Another headteacher commented that providers of support for vulnerable children, particularly providers of Alternative Provision, tended to enter and leave the arena very rapidly which created issues in terms of stability. Another school highlighted the difficulty in buying in additional educational psychology support from external providers as the thresholds they used did not necessarily accord with those used by the local authority which retained control of the statutory assessment process.

Even beyond the limitations of the range of services on offer, some schools did profess to a lack of confidence in commissioning in this area. Some primary schools in particular said they had neither the appetite nor the capacity to commission services for vulnerable children from outside the local authority. In another authority heads voiced an anxiety that external contractors may not always be principled in their pursuit of business and could 'over-diagnose' the needs of vulnerable children in the hope of securing more work.

In addition to the risks associated with school-based commissioning outlined above, the increasing autonomy and diversity of the education system also presents new challenges to local authorities in their role as a commissioner of services for the most vulnerable. There is some anxiety among local authorities that the conversion of special schools to academy status, coupled with existing support bases for children with special needs being situated in mainstream schools that have become academies, could lead to a mismatch between provision for special needs available locally and the needs of individual children and young people. However, there are good examples of how the discipline of commissioning support for vulnerable children in a more diverse and devolved education system has led to a more rigorous definition of outcomes and a better understanding between local authorities and schools of mutual expectations. A more intractable challenge that local authorities face is how, as commissioners for and champions of the most vulnerable, they can ensure that services for vulnerable families are joined up and coherent, as the diversity of providers and commissioning routes becomes greater. It is telling that in their self evaluations only two local authorities agreed with the statement *"We are confident that relationships and methods of communication are such that the support offered to the most vulnerable children and families will continue to be joined up as the education system and the market for support becomes more diverse."*

## Emerging local solutions

### Local authorities as convenors of partnerships

Effective partnership working between schools is absolutely essential if vulnerable children are to continue to have timely access to the high quality education that they deserve, and the local authority has a critical role in enabling those partnerships to be successful. The action research points to the fact that the effectiveness of Fair Access arrangements depends on the extent to which they are seen as transparent, objective and fair. Furthermore, the way in which the local authority convenes and supports the partnership can be a critical factor in its success or failure. As in other areas explored in this report, some of the key determinants appear to be:

- constructing the partnership so that schools lead and own the agenda
- establishing the moral purpose and using peer pressure to enforce it
- paying sufficient attention to the detailed criteria that are needed to inform difficult decisions
- demonstrating, through effective use of the data, that collective responsibility is needed and that decisions are fair and transparent.

The case studies set out below describe how one local authority has refreshed its Fair Access Protocols, and how a second local authority has supported partnerships of schools to take collective responsibility for exclusions:

#### Keeping on track: Bolton's approach to developing protocols for vulnerable pupils

##### What was the issue?

Bolton local authority was concerned that the quality of provision for its most vulnerable children was not as secure as it would wish. It recognised that, in the context of increasing school autonomy and the rising needs of its pupil population, including an increasing number of international new arrivals, the pattern of provision and support for its most vulnerable pupils would need refinement.

##### What did Bolton do?

Initially the local authority convened a working group to look at the future of three small Pupil Referral Units. The group was chaired by a former head teacher, and included two head teachers from each of Bolton's three clusters of secondary schools, the head of Bolton's EBD Special Schools, the overall head of the PRU service and an Assistant Director from the authority.

During the scoping phase of the work, the group realised that it would not be able to do justice to the complexity of the issues without extending its brief. It therefore expanded its remit to consider the functioning of the PRU system overall and also the protocols by

which vulnerable pupils were supported in the education system. The working group set itself twin aims: firstly to ensure that vulnerable pupils were appropriately catered for either within the mainstream school system or alternative provision; and, secondly, to ensure that the system was transparent to all and that no school had to admit more vulnerable children than it was able to cater for.

The work of the group lasted for over twelve months, during which key protocols were established for Managed Moves and in-year Fair Access, with real attention paid to the detail of the documents. These were then taken, for discussion and further development, to the secondary head teacher's conference, through which the protocols were agreed in a document titled 'Keeping on Track'. Following this, the protocols were taken to each governing body for approval. Subsequently, to make the protocols work more effectively, a full review of the PRUs was undertaken which has created a holistic structure which has more flexibility of staffing and better routes for children.

### **What has been the impact?**

All secondary schools have signed up to the protocols, and a similar process is now underway for the primary sector. The Fair Access Panel has been central to the successful operation of the 'Keeping on Track' reforms. This panel looks at individual pupils who may be hard to place and agrees the most appropriate placement to meet their needs. The panel is chaired by the Director of Children's Services, which demonstrates the importance that the local authority attaches to it, and includes headteachers who play an active role in assessing needs. The success of the panel in agreeing placements depends on its attention to detail, careful record keeping, and acting sensitively to the needs of pupils, parents and schools. If deemed necessary additional support is identified and allocated.

Over the past year the list of pupils to be placed has significantly reduced in number as schools adhere to the practices and principles of the Keeping on Track protocols. Members of the panel consider the options that are available to pupils awaiting placements, taking into consideration the history of the pupil, intelligence from multiple agencies, parental preference and any other relevant information available from SEN. Admissions and exclusions data is also carefully monitored and scrutinised, with a monthly report which gives an overview of those pupils permanently excluded, managed moves and trials.

The success of the Fair Access process is based on trust, strong relationships, and the readiness of schools to increasingly challenge each other and apply peer pressure where the best interests of a child are not being met. It is also important that the Fair Access arrangements form part of a continuum, with the Bolton PRU and Behaviour Support Service providing support to schools during the re-integration of pupils back into mainstream education.

### **What is the learning for the system?**

Bolton's experience demonstrates how Fair Access for the most vulnerable pupils can be successfully managed in an education system which is more diverse and in which there are an increasing number of autonomous schools. Key to the successful approach in Bolton was the time taken to develop detailed and binding protocols to which all schools felt they could sign up, the ownership of the approach by schools, and the transparency with which the new approach was then implemented. The local authority has reported that a number of headteachers, of both academies and local authority schools, have been powerfully supportive of the new approach and that expectations have been established that schools have tried certain interventions before they exclude.

Bolton has also perceived a shift in the psychology of the education system. In their view, when systems such as Fair Access were statutory, there were always some schools that in practice did not fully participate. In the new education landscape, the challenge is to win schools' hearts and minds, so that they believe that certain processes, such as Fair Access, might not be statutory but are essential. If that can be achieved then schools are more likely to commit to the outcomes and ensure they are implemented successfully than they might have been previously. However Bolton also recognises that their ability to translate the system they have in place effectively from secondary to primary and ensure its continued success as the education landscape continues to change, will be a significant test of its impact.

## Warwickshire's area behaviour partnerships

### What was the issue?

Warwickshire was concerned that the rate of permanent exclusions in its secondary schools was too high and that the quality of education being offered by the PRU for excluded pupils was not good enough. Some of the county's most vulnerable young people were therefore not receiving the education that they deserved and that would enable them to succeed. These anxieties were confirmed in June 2010 when the PRU was inspected and deemed to require Special Measures. Warwickshire recognised that the commitment to increasing the autonomy of schools signalled in the 2011 White Paper provided an opportunity to construct a more innovative solution which delegated both the power and responsibility for the education of young people at risk of exclusion to schools, with the local authority providing the strategic direction.

### What did Warwickshire do?

Alongside immediate measures to improve rapidly the quality of education offered by the PRU, Warwickshire embarked upon a longer term transformation programme for how excluded pupils within the county would be supported. A unifying factor for elected members, schools and the local authority was to improve provision for children excluded or at risk of exclusion. The local authority initiated discussions with the county's four Area Behaviour Partnerships, which are established partnerships of secondary schools with a history of collaborating on improving behaviour. A project board was set up, chaired by

the lead member for children's services and including the four headteachers who chaired the secondary area behaviour partnerships, a primary headteacher and three local authority officers as voting members. This board developed a strategic plan and took ownership of guiding the transformation programme.

The basic premise of the solution was that funding would be devolved to the area based partnerships for managing and preventing exclusions but that, in return for the funding, schools in the partnership would collectively assume responsibility for any excluded pupils and would use the devolved funding to commission appropriate alternative provision. In developing this approach Warwickshire learnt from the DfE exclusions pilots, to which it is an associate. From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011, Cabinet and the Schools Forum agreed to devolve £1.6 million in funding to the four secondary partnerships. Within these Partnerships, secondary school head teachers worked together to share best practice on early intervention, fund early intervention programmes, engage in managed transfers and if appropriate purchase packages of part-time alternative provision. Where a pupil was excluded, the Area Behaviour Partnership purchased packages of support appropriate to the individual child's needs. They could, if they wished, commission places in the PRU at the cost of just over £500 per week or commission full-time alternative provision. The local authority created an interim list of quality assured providers and guidance on commissioning alternative provision, whilst a tender exercise was initiated to establish a permanent list of providers. Each Area Behaviour Partnership entered into a binding agreement with the local authority which set out the level of funding that would be devolved and rights and responsibilities of each of the partners to the agreement.

Following a successful pilot, elected members agreed to commit to this new devolved approach to managing exclusions for the long-term. There was a recognition that for the new approach to be adopted as the norm, a permanent shift in the ownership of resources and decision-making needed to take place. Therefore for the 2012/13 academic year elected members agreed to close the PRU and devolve all the associated funding – £2.8 million – to schools to manage behaviour and exclusions. Funding is to be devolved in line with previous allocations to the secondary and primary PRU. Therefore, £2.4m will be allocated to the secondary behaviour partnerships, and £400,000 is allocated to clusters of primary schools with relatively high levels of exclusions to resource in-school inclusion support groups. The local authority offers short stay assessment places, for a maximum of six weeks at a cost approximately £2,500.

#### **What has been the impact?**

The impact of the new approach has been extremely positive. Between September 2011 and May 2012 there were 28 permanent secondary exclusions in Warwickshire compared with 77 in the same period the previous year. This represents both better outcomes for individual children and young people and a significant financial saving. The Area Behaviour Partnerships own the agenda and are developing different local solutions to managing exclusions. Some partnerships, for example, are choosing to devolve a certain proportion of the funding to individual schools to finance early intervention projects whereas others are retaining all the funding in a central commissioning pot. The local authority has

funded a consultant to work with the partnerships to identify and spread learning about what works.

### **What is the learning for the system?**

While it is still work in progress, the radical solution to improving the life chances of young people at risk of exclusion that Warwickshire has developed goes with the grain of a more autonomous school system. It devolves decision-making, control of funding, and ownership of the agenda to schools. But it does so in a way that firmly establishes the expectation that schools will take collective as well as individual responsibility for the outcomes for children and young people. Indeed, Warwickshire has identified that one of the key lessons from the project is for schools to collectively take responsibility for all the children in their area. The new approach to supporting children at risk of exclusion has worked best in the areas where this commitment is explicit.

The importance of the Area Based Partnership agreements in clearly articulating the allocation of powers and responsibilities in the new system is great. These required careful and detailed negotiation to get right. Specifically schools were clear that headteachers retained the right to exclude pupils and that the ultimate statutory responsibility for securing alternative provision for any excluded pupil within 6 days remains with the local authority. However, within that clear statutory framework the commissioning nature of the partnership agreements provides a mechanism for schools to take day-to-day responsibility for the actions that enable the local authority to meet its statutory requirement.

Alongside careful negotiation and co-construction of the solution with schools, the political leadership of the transformation programme was an important lever in driving the change through. This enabled bold decisions to be taken, such as closing the PRU, to release the funding needed to make the new system work, and firmly anchored the solution in the local authority's democratic mandate to secure the best outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people.

## **Local authorities as a maker and shaper of effective commissioning**

The risks outlined above, around the commissioning of services for the most vulnerable children, point to an important role for local authorities in developing and potentially quality assuring the range of provision and support for vulnerable children that is available and skilling up schools, and partnerships of schools, to commission high quality specialist services to support their most vulnerable pupils. The case study below shows how one local authority has approached the commissioning of support bases for children with special educational needs in local academies.

### **Recommissioning special educational need support bases in Thurrock**

#### **What was the issue?**

Thurrock's existing special educational need support bases, for example for supporting young people with autism, with visual impairment, or with a hearing impairment, were

located in a number of maintained mainstream schools. Over the last 18 months, 4 of these schools have become or are just about to become academies. This presented the local authority with a number of potential challenges. The SEN resource bases were vital sources of support for vulnerable children across the community, and there was an initial anxiety that if academies were to exercise their autonomy to alter the focus of this specialist resource, or to direct support towards a different group of children and young people, that the ability of the local authority to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people could be diminished.

#### **What did Thurrock do?**

Thurrock embarked upon a programme working collaboratively with the academies to systematically recommission its existing support bases, using the same core principles irrespective of whether the support base was located in an academy or a local authority school. This process was entered into in a spirit of partnership between the local authority and schools in question and was felt to be a really constructive engagement in which clarity was reached on both sides on what each party could bring to the support of vulnerable children.

As a key part of this recommissioning process the authority has moved away from more informal service level agreements and is setting up a tighter and more formal contract with each school. This sets out clearly the contribution that the local authority would make to funding the resource base, both in terms of revenue and capital, and the specific outcomes for vulnerable children and young people that the school would deliver in return for the funding. The process was more business-like and structured than the previous commissioning had been.

Stringent clauses have been written into the agreements between the local authority and schools so that where the local authority had made a very significant capital investment in a resource base they retained the capacity to claw that money back, on a scale that diminishes over time, if the school decided to withdraw from providing the services in the future and wanted to use the building for a different use. This provides the local authority with the reassurance that their long-term investment in support for children with special educational needs will continue to be used to support those children in the future.

Arrangements for monitoring the quality of the provision with annual review meetings to review the performance were outlined within the contracted service level agreement. Standards and performance indicators are monitored carefully at this meeting in response to a written report by the school. If any remedial action needs to be taken it has to be done so within an agreed period with further opportunity for review to ensure any issues are addressed quickly and effectively.

#### **What has been the impact?**

The impact of this recommissioning process has been very positive. It has clearly demonstrated the commitment of academies in Thurrock to inclusion and working to support children with high needs, for the benefit of all schools in the local area. It has also



demonstrated how the local authority and its schools, of all types, can work successfully in partnership together to meet the needs of some of the more vulnerable children.

Schools, including both academies and local authority maintained schools, are responding well to the tighter remit and have valued the precision that the new arrangements bring. The local authority has also found the process of recommissioning to be a helpful discipline in terms of articulating the outcomes that they expect for children and young people with special educational needs. With good outcomes in the bases already, the local authority expects to at least maintain if not improve already good performance.

#### **What is the learning for the system?**

The experience of Thurrock very clearly illustrates how, given the right framework and relationships, academies, maintained schools and local authorities can work together to plan inclusive provision for vulnerable children. Far from being an impediment, the need to commission more formally in an increasingly autonomous system, has helpfully led to greater clarity and more robust expectations on both sides. From Thurrock's perspective, the work with their schools has enabled them to sustain high quality provision, which 18 months ago they may have considered to be at risk of being discontinued.

### **Local authorities as champions of pupils, families and communities**

Despite the perceived challenges associated with advocating for and championing the most vulnerable children in a more devolved system, the different and more arms-length relationship that local authorities now have with schools, potentially gives them license to carry out this role in a more powerful way. One local authority, for example, is exploring how the local admissions forum might change its focus to become an advocate for the interests of children and parents in navigating admissions, and particularly of some of the most vulnerable families in the county, as set out in the following case study:

#### **A new focus for the admissions forum in Gloucestershire**

##### **What was the issue?**

Gloucestershire's Admission Forum has run for over 10 years. However the influence of the forum has reduced significantly due to changes in legislation and also a recognition of the fact that with the number of academies growing rapidly, many more schools are acting as their own admission authorities. Nonetheless, members and officers felt that there was still a need to challenge admissions practice and act as a champion of the interest of children and their parents.

##### **What did Gloucestershire do?**

The removal of the statutory requirement for local authorities to establish an Admissions Forum gave Gloucestershire license to think differently about the role and nature of this body in the future. The local authority has reconstituted the admissions forum as a smaller group of local members and Diocesan representatives whose role is to discuss all aspects of school place planning and admissions issues, and make recommendations to

the Lead Cabinet member. The particular focus of the group will be on ensuring that families receive good quality choice advice, guidance and support so that they are able to navigate the admissions system successfully, and maximise their chances of getting their children into the school of their choice. The group is considering how some of Gloucestershire's existing resource might be deployed most effectively to support and advocate for vulnerable families in this regard.

The group will be outward facing and actively consult with both parent communities and schools, drawing on existing school representative groups such as the primary and secondary headteachers associations to share information and debate issues.

**What has been the impact and learning for the system?**

The changes are still at an early stage, so it is too soon to be definitive about the impact. However, it is hoped that the new group will provide a platform for the critical analysis of issues and options and proactive management of changes. This should enable successful handling of parent and stakeholder communication in an informative and consistent manner.

Developing a wider understanding of admission and school planning issues is important as the system becomes more diverse and devolved, and building the capacity of elected members to advocate and problem solve for families on these issues is a key strand in developing their role as champions of children, parents and communities in a more autonomous education landscape. Although it is early days, following the introduction of the new approach, there are indications that local stakeholders are becoming more confident in providing advice and guidance to families, which has improved the local support networks available, and are beginning to use their influence to broker local solutions.





















## Annex B continued

### School improvement

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3.1	As an authority we are confident that we have effective systems and capacity in our local area to either turn around or seek a suitable sponsor for any local authority primary schools that are performing poorly.	2	5	1	
3.2	As an authority we are confident that we have effective systems and capacity in our local area either to turn around or seek a suitable sponsor for any local authority secondary schools that are performing poorly.	2	5	1	
3.3	There is sufficient capacity and intelligence in the system locally, either in the local authority or its partners, to identify accurately the signs of underperformance or of declining performance.	1	4	3	
3.4	We have the knowledge, systems and capacity in our local area to support effectively underperforming or declining local authority schools.	2	4	1	1
3.5	We have sufficiently detailed knowledge and understanding of the strength of good and outstanding schools in our local area to be an effective broker of school to school support.	3	4	1	
3.6	We have the skills and capacity to monitor successfully and hold to account school to school support solutions for underperforming or poorly performing schools, including involving academies in those solutions where appropriate.	2	4	2	
3.7	We have a clear understanding of the extent and quality of the school improvement market locally, and have the confidence and skills to help shape that market.	2	3	3	
3.8	As a local authority we have the skills, knowledge and capacity to broker successfully in a sponsor to take on a poorly performing school in a way that will best meet the needs of pupils and the local community.	1	5	1	
3.9	The traded school improvement services that we offer to schools are high quality, good value and flexibly respond to what schools want and need. Our services compare favourably with other services available to schools.	1	5	1	
3.10	The majority of schools, both academies and local authority schools (where applicable), continue to buy into local authority traded improvement services.	3	2	2	
3.11	We have the mechanisms to monitor schools' satisfaction with local authority traded school improvement services and to develop these to meet changing needs.	2	3	2	
3.12	We are confident that local academy sponsors have the skills and capacity to support their sponsored schools to improve or to sustain outstanding provision.		5	3	
3.13	The strengths of our relationship with local sponsors is such that we are able to raise any concerns we have with them about the performance of their schools and they engage constructively in the dialogue and take action to address issues raised.		7	1	
3.14	We are confident that the convertor academies in our local authority have the skills, capacity and self-awareness to improve or to sustain outstanding performance, including sufficient support and challenge being provided by the governing body.		5	3	
3.15	We believe that our relationships with convertor academies are such that if it was clear that one was underperforming or declining we could constructively raise the issues with them and jointly develop a support solution.		5	3	
3.16	We are confident that secondary local authority schools, either individually or in partnership, have the ability to commission successfully high quality support for school improvement from other schools or the open market.		5	3	
3.17	We are confident that primary local authority schools, either individually or in partnership, have the ability to commission successfully high quality support for school improvement from other schools or the open market.		4	4	
3.18	We are confident that sponsored academies have the ability to commission successfully high quality support for school improvement from other schools or the open market.		6	2	
3.19	We are confident that convertor academies, either individually or in partnership, have the ability to commission successfully high quality support for school improvement from other schools or the open market.		6	2	

## Annex B continued

### Support for vulnerable children

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4.1	Current arrangements for ensuring fair access for children and young people who are vulnerable are working well.	1	5	2	
4.2	Relationships with and between schools and the established processes are strong enough that fair access arrangements are likely to continue to work as more schools become autonomous.		5	3	
4.3	In the event of a dispute between schools which involves an academy, or between the local authority and an academy, in relation to in year admissions for hard to place children we know what the escalation mechanism is and we are confident that we can make it work and resolve the issue in a timely fashion.		5	3	
4.4	As a local authority we have the necessary skills, capacity and information to carry out our statutory duties with regards to children with SEN.		6	2	
4.5	As a local authority we have the necessary skills, capacity and information to carry out our statutory duties with regards to providing education for excluded pupils.	1	7		
4.6	We currently receive sufficient information on vulnerable pupils from our local authority schools to ensure that their educational needs are being met effectively.		5	3	
4.7	We currently receive sufficient information on vulnerable pupils from local academies to ensure that their educational needs are being met effectively.		3	5	
4.8	We are confident that as more schools become autonomous we will continue to receive sufficient information to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children are being met.		2	6	
4.9	We have a clear understanding of the local market for additional support services available for vulnerable children, and have the skills and confidence to shape that market to meet local needs.		4	4	
4.10	We believe that secondary local authority schools, either individually or in partnership, have the skills, confidence and capacity to commission high quality support from the market for services for vulnerable children.		5	3	
4.11	We believe that primary local authority schools, either individually or in partnership, have the skills, confidence and capacity to commission high quality support from the market for services for vulnerable children.		3	5	
4.12	We believe that sponsored academies have the skills, confidence and capacity to commission high quality support from the market for services for vulnerable children.		5	3	
4.13	We believe that convertor academies, either individually or in partnership, have the skills, confidence and capacity to commission high quality support from the market for services for vulnerable children.		4	4	
4.14	Where the local authority has developed traded services for supporting vulnerable children these are high quality, good value for money and respond to the needs of schools, families and children. The local authority's services compare favourably with other services available on the market.	1	3	3	
4.15	The majority of schools, both academies and local authority schools (where applicable), continue to buy into local authority traded support services for vulnerable children.	1	6	1	
4.16	The local authority has the skills, knowledge and capacity to commission effectively support from the most vulnerable children from schools or other providers.	1	6	1	
4.17	We are confident that relationships and methods of communication are such that the support offer to the most vulnerable children and families will continue to be joined up as the education system and the market for support becomes more diverse.		2	6	

**Ref: DFE-RR224**

**ISBN: 978-1-78105-122-1**

**© ISOS Partnership**

**June 2012**