



Report to CYP&FS Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee Monday 11th September 2017

Report of: Chief Executive – Learn Sheffield

Subject: Learn Sheffield Update

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Summary:

This report has been requested by the Scrutiny Committee to cover the work of Learn Sheffield and the School Improvement Strategy, including a specific section on the work to identify and support young carers.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	X
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	X
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The Committee is asked to consider the report and provide views and comments.

Background Papers:

Sheffield Priorities Update (May 2017)

<http://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Strategies/Sheffield-Priorities>

Learn Sheffield School Improvement Strategy (2016-18)

<http://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Strategies/School-Improvement-Strategy>

Sheffield Priorities Development Programme (July 2017)

<http://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Strategies/Development-Programme>

Category of Report: OPEN

Report of the Chief Executive of Learn Sheffield –

Learn Sheffield Update

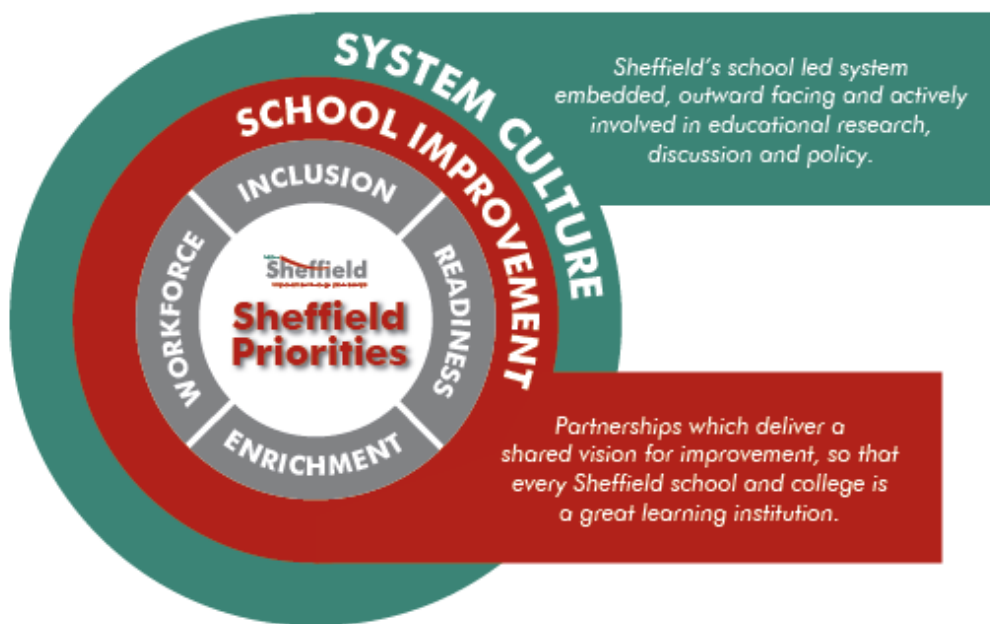
1. Introduction/Context

- 1.1 This report has been requested by the Scrutiny Committee to cover the work of Learn Sheffield and the School Improvement Strategy, including a specific section on the work to identify and support young carers.
- 1.2 Learn Sheffield is a not-for-profit schools company which is owned by the schools and colleges of the city (80%) and Sheffield City Council (20%). Every publically funded nursery, primary school, special school, secondary school and college in the city has chosen to join Learn Sheffield.
- 1.3 Learn Sheffield is commissioned by Sheffield City Council to carry out the statutory duties which relate to school improvement. This is a three-year commission and we are now entering the final year.
- 1.4 The purpose of Learn Sheffield is school improvement and it is founded on the principle that improvement will come through partnerships within a school-led system. The strategic vision of Learn Sheffield takes a wide view of school improvement which considers both the short and long term barriers to improvement.
- 1.5 There are two key documents which set out the work that Learn Sheffield seeks to do. The Sheffield Priorities set out the vision for education in the city, which is focussed on longer term priorities, whilst the School Improvement Strategy outlines the way in which Learn Sheffield will deliver the objectives in the commission for school improvement.
- 1.6 The need to identify and support young carers was identified as an objective in the Sheffield Priorities, within the theme of Inclusion. A pilot project, which was funded by Learn Sheffield and delivered by Sheffield Young Carers working with six schools, concluded in July 2017.

2. Sheffield Priorities

- 2.1 The Sheffield Priorities were developed with stakeholders from across the education community, with the support of the National Education Trust as an external partner. The most recent update was published in May 2017 (see link on page 1) and includes updates and actions relating to the key strategies.
- 2.2 The Sheffield Priorities Development Programme (see link on page 1) was published in July 2017. It has the twin focus of explaining more about the different partnerships that contribute to improved educational outcomes and ensuring that all schools are aware of the different opportunities that exist to engage with the strategies that have been developed to address the priorities.
- 2.3 Both of these documents are organised to address the six themes: system culture, school improvement, workforce, inclusion, readiness & enrichment. The overall objectives of the themes are on the next page.

Sheffield Priorities — Key Themes



To identify and overcome the barriers to learning for vulnerable learners and their families.



Recruitment, development and retention of high quality teachers, school staff, leaders and governance.



Children and young people ready for learning, the next stage in education & adult life in a cohesive community and successful economy.




Rich learning experiences across the curriculum as an entitlement for all children and young people.

- 2.4 Learn Sheffield is currently working with stakeholders (including Sheffield City Council, schools and others) to develop a funding model to support educational improvement beyond July 2018. A more ambitious model would build on the current strategy but incorporate more of the priorities explicitly.

3. Sheffield School Improvement Strategy

3.1 The slide below, which is taken from a presentation about Learn Sheffield to colleagues from other areas of the country, summarises the key features of the Sheffield School Improvement Strategy.

School Improvement Strategy



Learn Sheffield is commissioned by Sheffield City Council to deliver the strategic advice needed to school improvement. The core approach is school improvement through self-reflection, peer challenge and support. This is achieved through working with the primary, secondary and special school improvement teams. Learn Sheffield will deliver school improvement support to school improvement teams from the beginning of the 2016/17 school year.

Learn Sheffield
The school improvement partner

Category	Criteria	Support & Challenge Offer
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting good or outstanding performance targets by Ofsted or being overdue to performance On track to improve performance and secure or maintain an outstanding Ofsted judgement Good / really improving due to established partnership working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support through locally action plan Annualised cost (or equivalent)
Yellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good but has some weaknesses which require support Good but not meeting standard of outstanding schools At risk of not really improving Requires more than standard but really improving Underperforming despite performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support through locally action plan Termly offer (or equivalent) Annual Learn Sheffield Support & Challenge planning meeting School Review considered
Orange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good but vulnerable to fall At risk of not really improving Below/less than standards but really improving Requires performance evidence Performance significantly better schools in similar context Supporting good managing weaknesses Early sign of strong improvement but with vulnerabilities remaining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support through locally action plan Identified additional improvement/Partner Support Half termly offer (or equivalent) Termly Learn Sheffield Support & Challenge meeting School Review agreed by Learn Sheffield Consider Governance Review
Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variable performance across school or not Below/less than standards with vulnerabilities remaining Requires more than standard but really improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support through locally action plan Termly offer (or equivalent) Half termly offer (or equivalent) Half termly Learn Sheffield Support & Challenge meeting School Review agreed by Learn Sheffield Consider Governance Review Consider Governance Review

- Sheffield Improvement Strategy developed and trialed through 2015/16 and launched in September 2016.
- Each school is categorised by self, peers (partnership group) & Learn Sheffield.
- Work through nine partnership groups (7 primary localities, secondary & special).
- School category leads to an entitlement (support and challenge).
- Model for all schools – maintained and academies (universal offer).
- Workforce – core Learn Sheffield team, Associates & partnership groups.

3.2 The model will be further developed for 2017/18 based on decisions made with each sector in the summer term. The key features above are unchanged, as this will be the second year of a two-year strategy, but the modifications are described below.

Primary Sector:

- Separation of the entitlement into activity that is evaluative (e.g. meetings, reviews, etc.) and developmental (e.g. support partners, training, Ofsted preparation, bespoke data analysis, etc.)
- Addition of criteria and entitlement relating to exclusions and attendance plus some small changes to the school profile content.

Secondary Sector:

- Addition of a training event for leaders before the self-categorisation and a different approach to the peer challenge element of the process.
- Changes to the school profile and criteria to reflect changes to the assessment system and to provide more contextual data (including inclusion data) and analysis of the performance of pupil groups.

Special Sector:

- Changes to the supported peer review process to increase the level of challenge and the professional development opportunities.

3.3 These changes are also being accompanied by some growth in the small central team to provide additional capacity in each sector.

3.4 Learn Sheffield is currently working with stakeholders (as described in 2.4) to develop a funding model to support educational improvement beyond July 2018. The intention is to develop a 'Sheffield Challenge' model which builds on the current strategy but is more ambitious, in both the support and challenge of schools.

4. Young Carers

4.1 The Scrutiny Committee requested a specific section on the work to identify and support young carers, which is an objective identified within the Sheffield Priorities.

4.2 1 in 12 children and young people are taking on mid to high level care for an ill or disabled family member (BBC, Nov 2010). This means there are over 7000 young carers in Sheffield, many of whom remain hidden and unsupported until a crisis happens. Appendix 1 contains an essay on supporting young carers which outlines a more detailed perspective on the need to better support young carers.

4.3 Learn Sheffield have funded a pilot which was run by Sheffield Young Carers (SYC) which sought to embed and develop best practice around identifying and supporting young carers within schools. This pilot includes a focus on the development of universal provision and school culture, which are essential to improving the experience of young carers, crucial to the level of demand on specialist services, but harder to fund than targeted programmes. The final report will be published later in the autumn but some key findings are included below.

4.4 The project built on the learning from the Big Lottery-funded VOYCE Project with SYC offering six schools (one later had to drop out leaving one secondary and four primary schools) the opportunity to:

- build capacity within the school to identify and support pupils with caring responsibilities
- monitor data to track the progress of those pupils in order to evaluate and disseminate the impact of this work
- have the chance to achieve a Young Carers in Schools Award

4.5 The project activity included:

- SYC met with the head teachers from all the schools
- Schools identified SLT and operational young carers lead staff
- SYC offered two training workshops to the schools: one on how to use SYC's bespoke young carers' identification process¹ within the school; and a second on resources that schools can use to support young carers once they identify them. These courses had mixed attendance from the participating schools
- All schools implemented the young carer identification process, although some were not able to do this until late in the project
- All schools offered targeted interventions to young carers identified through this process

- Schools added young carers as a category to their data monitoring systems, enabling us to track the hard outcomes achieved through the project
 - All schools have joined SYC's [Young Carers Schools Network](#) to receive ongoing access to local and national developments, training, resources and networking opportunities.
- 4.6 Schools experienced varied results, although the combination of staff and pupil awareness and the proactive identification process led to previously unknown young carers being identified in all of the schools. The number of pupils who were identified as having caring responsibilities at home varied from two to twelve pupils in the target year groups.
- 4.7 A wider range of impacts was also described, reflecting the need for school culture to be at the heart of universal provision.

Other impacts on young carers:

- All schools who had identified young carers in Year 6 ensured they passed this information at transition to ensure they receive support around their caring role at secondary school
- Schools had implemented a range of interventions to support young carers in their schools, including one-to-one support, group support, family support and referrals on to other specialist agencies where needed
- As a result of these interventions, all the schools reported improved attendance, behaviour, confidence and resilience amongst the pupils they had identified as young carers through this project
- Following support from her school and from SYC, one Y4 pupil felt confident enough to prepare an assembly for her whole school where she shared her experiences of being a young carer. This led to two other pupils self-identifying as carers to their school

Impacts on staff:

- Some schools reported that, alongside the questionnaires, the heightened awareness and understanding amongst all staff achieved through the assemblies and lesson plans has further increased identification of young carers through informal conversations and team discussions
- Staff also stated feeling more confident in meeting the needs of young carers thanks to the resources and training provided by SYC

Impacts on the school:

- All schools felt they had built their capacity to identify and support young carers, increasing the likelihood of early identification and intervention for young carers. This meant they felt able to offer individual, appropriate support within school, which local and national research highlights as vital for young carers education, well-being and progression
- Proactive identification has meant schools have been able to offer support to young carers earlier on, reducing the negative impacts of caring escalating or crises occurring. Schools now feel able to meet the needs of young carers within school, only referring on to specialist agencies in more complex cases

- Schools felt children are a lot more aware now and are therefore more likely to share information about friends they are worried about
- One school council put young carers on their agenda and want to help their school keep raising awareness and identifying young carers
- One school experienced high levels of sudden bereavement this year. The work around young carers supported wider conversations around illness and loss which complimented the work being done to support pupils and staff affected by bereavement
- One school has begun collating their portfolio of evidence for a Young Carers in Schools Award, which they hope to submit in Autumn 2017. Other schools are also hoping to apply for the award during 2017/18

Impacts on families and the wider community:

- Several schools reported improved relationships with families which enabled them to offer further support to the family, thus reducing the caring or impact of caring on their pupils
- Several schools reported very high levels of stigma, particularly around mental illness, creating barriers to young people and families asking for support. The assemblies and lesson plans began opening up conversations around this and it is hoped that ongoing work will continue to break down some of the deeply-entrenched stigma around issues affecting young carers and their families
- The project has helped Sheffield to begin meeting our Sheffield Priority of identifying every young carer in the city by 2020. The schools involved now also have the training, awareness and resources to continue identifying more young carers in years to come

4.8 The key challenge, identified in the draft report and now being explored further, was capacity. The implementation in the project schools was affected by changes in personnel and the circumstances of schools. Other barriers to identification included the ability of the questionnaire to work effectively in different stages or communities, changes in the circumstances of carers (e.g. not being identified because the situation was currently not in crisis) and the variety of stigmas relating to different reasons for being a carer.

4.9 The final report will synthesise this learning to share with schools and other stakeholder groups. The next steps will be determined by this learning and also the availability of funding to support further work in this area.

5. What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?

5.1 Sheffield's educational performance outcomes have improved significantly over recent years due to the development of a school-led partnership approach.

5.2 Pupil outcomes across the education sector (from Early Years to Key Stage 5) are now broadly nationally average. The proportion of good/better schools finished 2016/17 at 84%, which is the highest it has ever been. This is a 13% improvement since January 2015, which has seen the gap between Sheffield and national more than halve to just under 5%.

- 5.3 Our ambition now has to be another ‘step change’ in performance so that Sheffield has outcomes which are consistently better than national, which would reflect very strong performance given the contextual challenges faced by the city. This must include more consistently good outcomes for our most vulnerable learners and be accompanied by greater ‘readiness’ for our young people.
- 5.4 This is essential for Sheffield if it is to have the thriving economy and high levels of wellbeing and cohesiveness that we would want to see. Education is crucial to the development of our human capital, which is the basis of our economic competitiveness.
- 5.5 The Learn Sheffield model provides a platform for collaboration and improvement which is very unusual in the current education landscape, and has provoked a great deal of interest around the country. Sheffield has the building blocks in place to now develop a more ambitious strategy, which can deliver the next ‘step change’ in outcomes.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Committee is being asked to consider this update and provide views and comments.
- 6.2 Other content in this policy area which the committee may wish to consider during the 2017/18 school year may include;
- the outcomes and recommendations of a Learn Sheffield peer review which is being led out by Christine Gilbert (formerly head of Ofsted) in early November.
 - the analysis of 2017 school performance following the release of national data later this autumn.
 - the development of a new funding model for educational improvement and a new city school improvement strategy.

Appendix 1 – Supporting Young Carers Essay

Stephen Betts, CEO of Learn Sheffield, wrote the essay below for Marc Rowland's book 'Learning Without Labels: improving outcomes for vulnerable pupils'. It is focussed on the need to better support young carers, which is a Sheffield Priority.

Supporting Young Carers

All too often, when asking a school how they support young carers, the response is, “we don’t have any young carers in our school”. In reality, this may actually mean “we don’t know if we have young carers in our school”. This is unlikely to be the case and the result is that our education system too often misses the opportunity to support one of our most vulnerable groups of learners.

What is a young carer?

A young carer is defined by Sheffield Young Carers as a child or young person who provides substantial unpaid care for a relative who has disabilities, long term physical illness, mental health difficulties and/or drug or alcohol issues.

Being a young carer means you will be providing the practical and/or emotional care that an adult would normally provide. This may include doing jobs around the house, shopping, helping with personal care (bathing, getting dressed), giving medication, providing emotional support and looking after themselves or their siblings.

The impact of being a young carer can be profound. Any adult with experience of taking on a substantial caring role will, however they view the experience overall, often talk about how tiring, worrying or lonely it can be. Being a young carer can affect a young person in many ways – including social isolation, bullying, difficulties with school attendance and achievement, and physical and mental ill health themselves.

What can a school do?

The principles that underpin supporting young carers well are the same as they are for supporting all vulnerable groups. This is not surprising when they essentially relate to the culture of a great school. Schools that do well by young carers need:

- Fantastic teaching
- Relentless and shared ambition for every pupil
- High expectations for both attainment and readiness
- Systems that identify barriers (and aggregated barriers) and are solution focused
- To develop provision that meets needs (not the other way around)
- Reflective and evidence-based decision making
- To be a school which is characterised by positive relationships
- More fantastic teaching

As a system leader, I recognise that our support for young carers is not as well developed as it is for many other vulnerable groups. We need to be talking about the quality of support for young carers, sharing the approaches and practice that are having the greatest impact. But we also need to focus on overcoming the lack of understanding. We need to improve the identification of young carers. The current situation often reminds me of the stage that we had reached as a profession in relation to pupils with Special Educational Needs when I was a new teacher twenty years ago.

'We don't have any young carers'

It is always hard to accurately quantify the size of a group that is often hidden, but research conducted by the BBC in 2010 found that one in twelve pupils provide mid-level to high-level care for someone in their family . In Sheffield this means that Sheffield Young Carers estimate that we have over 7000 young carers in the city. This would be an average of just over 40 per school if they were spread evenly across all sectors.

'Young carers are in secondary schools'

The majority of young carers are found in secondary schools, but it is a smaller majority than you might think. Barnados say that the average age of a young carer is twelve. Our local data suggests that around 40% of the new referrals last year were aged twelve or under at the point of referral. It is dangerous to extrapolate this data too far, as this may simply reflect a greater awareness or identification of young carers at secondary age, but if only 20% of the estimated number of young carers in Sheffield were in a primary school this would be an average of more than ten per school.

We should also remember that the point of referral doesn't always reflect the age at which caring began. Whilst sometimes the point of referral coincides with a change of circumstance and is the point when a child begins taking on caring responsibilities, often young carers are not identified or offered support until the caring role comes to light due to a crisis or significant concern arises. The caring has often been happening for a long time before this, with the impacts of this very entrenched.

Given that young carers are also found across socio-economic groups and have a broad range of contextual factors, it isn't hard to reach the conclusion that there will be few schools who actually don't currently have any young carers.

If further food for thought was needed here about the under-identification of this group, a survey in 2010 found that 39% of young carers said that nobody in their school was aware of their caring role (The Princess Royal Trust for Carers).

What approach do schools need to take?

Once a school has recognised that they are likely to have young carers then a whole school approach to identifying and supporting young carers needs to be developed. The Carers Trust (see link below) suggest that all school staff need to have the knowledge and confidence to support young carers because:

- One of the main reasons young carers say they do not access support is stigma. A positive whole school ethos where young carers and their families are respected and valued by pupils, staff and the wider school community is crucial to ensuring young carers and their families feel safe and confident to access support.
- Many young carers are hidden. All school staff need to know how to identify young carers to ensure they do not slip through the net.
- A pupil with caring responsibilities may self-identify to any member of staff whom they feel they can talk to and share their worries and concerns.
- All staff need to be aware of the school's process for sharing information about a young carer. This will help ensure that information is only shared with the appropriate consent and with a view to guaranteeing that a pupil does not have to repeat their story several times.
- All staff should know not to discuss a pupil's caring role in front of their peers.

The identification and support of young carers is one of our Sheffield Priorities. We are working with Sheffield Young Carers on a pilot to explore approaches to identifying young carers in a group of primary schools. Initial findings suggest that this is difficult when the children involved do not already have some awareness of the concept of being a carer. It has also highlighted, perhaps predictably, the difficulties associated with introducing anything new into already busy organisations. More positively, we are seeing schools with strong existing provision, systems and culture for vulnerable pupils able to move relatively quickly to broaden this to identify and support young carers.

All of this suggests three initial steps for the school that wants to develop provision for young carers, to create the platform from which great provision can be developed.

1. Staff training needs to ensure that all staff have the knowledge to identify and support young carers
2. School systems which relate to vulnerable learners need to be widened to include young carers, taking account of the advice above.
3. Awareness of the issues relating to young carers needs to be raised across the school community, as a first step towards developing a positive, safe and supportive culture for young carers.

Where can I find out more?

- The 'Carers Trust – Professionals' webpage links to useful sites and documents, including 'Step 1: Gaining and understanding about young carers'.
<https://professionals.carers.org/> (young carers are one of the categories)

<https://professionals.carers.org/step-by-step-guide-gaining-an-understanding-about-young-carers>
- The Children's Society report 'Hidden from view' describes the experience of being a young carer.

http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/hidden_from_view_final.pdf
- Sheffield Young Carers are a brilliant example of a local resources, and also have a section for professionals on their website.

<https://www.sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk/>
- Keep an eye out for 'Young Carers Awareness Day' (January), '[Carers Week](#)' (June) and '[Carers Rights Day](#)' (November) which can provide easy opportunities to bring focus to this topic!

ⁱ The SYC identification process includes:

- Young carers awareness assemblies
- Follow up lessons (optional)
- Questionnaires to all pupils who have had the assembly
- Questionnaire analysis
- Follow-up one-to-ones to assess whether they are a young carer or not
- Offering Young Carers Assessments to all identified young carers and develop appropriate support plans