

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE  
YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

31 October 2007

**TRANSFORMATION OF LOCAL EDUCATION OFFICE  
ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS**

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the project to transform the work of local education offices and some related education administration at County Hall as part of the Directorate's contribution to the Council's Change and Improvement agenda.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council's Change and Improvement agenda is fundamentally about improving service delivery through the application of new technologies and by changing processes and working practices. It includes making better use of improved accommodation with increased remote and mobile working for some groups of staff. The Directorate's work to develop and implement Transformation proposals is overseen by a strategic implementation group which reports to the Children and Young People's Leadership Team.

2.2 Work to consider and review the work of local education offices, as part of the Directorate's overall Transformation agenda, began in May 2006. Assisted by colleagues from the Corporate Access to Services Team, a business process re-engineering exercise was undertaken on local education office administration. A 'partner' BPR project was undertaken relating to special educational needs administration, some of which is managed in local education offices, some at County Hall. These were reported to the Transformation Board in January 2007. A similar exercise has been undertaken in relation to the administration of Student Support.

2.3 The Council's medium term financial strategy includes efficiency savings in 2006/07 of £200k attributable to Transformation projects which related entirely to local education offices and special educational needs administration. The delay in progressing the review has meant that the savings were not made in 2006/07 and will not be achieved in 2007/08. This shortfall has been managed by the service in its financial planning and cost centre management for both years.

### 3.0 CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 The local education offices in Scarborough, Selby, Northallerton, Harrogate and Skipton are responsible for the local administration of the functions listed below. Most of the work is high volume, transactional and involves the rationing of provision of one kind or another against agreed policies and procedures. For instance, in 2006 approximately 12,400 applications for a school place and 3,400 applications for free transport, were processed.

- home to school transport
- free school meals
- primary and secondary school admissions
- secondary school selection
- special educational needs assessments
- work permits
- chaperone and performance licences
- home education by parents
- school clothing grants
- general enquiries e.g. school training days/changes to school day
- support for locally based specialist support services

3.2 It is estimated, overall, that 95% of the work of local education offices is clearly transacted by electronic means or by post.

3.3 Groups of staff based at County Hall administer student support and provide additional support for special educational needs administration. Local education offices and special educational needs functions are managed within the Access and Inclusion service area. Student support is managed within Learning, Youth and Skills.

3.4 The current fte staffing complement to manage these functions is shown below:

Local Education Offices	42.215
SEN (local and central)	16.13
Student Support	4.30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62.645</b>

### 4.0 NEW PATTERN OF DELIVERY

4.1 The key objectives are:

- (i) to deliver consistent administrative processes and service standards across the county that will be supported by up-to-date technology and provide better management information
- (ii) to do so at reduced cost by achieving staffing efficiencies

4.2 It was therefore proposed that, by September 2008, most of the administrative functions set out in Section 3, above, be brought together and delivered from Northallerton, where the managers responsible for the strategies and policies relating to these areas of provision are based. Following consultation with staff in September/early October 2007 it has been agreed that the SEN functions should, as per the original proposal, be delivered from Northallerton. All the remaining functions will be delivered from the Harrogate local education office. The key reasons for centralising the local education office functions in Harrogate are:

- to provide greater opportunity for existing staff to be recruited to the new structure
- this in turn will assist in retaining to a greater extent systems awareness and local knowledge, especially in the complex area of selection and admissions in Ripon and Skipton

## 5.0 EFFICIENCY SAVING

5.1 Taken together the BPR reports relating to the work of local education offices, SEN and student awards project staffing efficiencies in the order of 24 fte posts or approximately 400k net of reinvestment in the Customer Service Centre.

	Potential Saving £k	Re-investment in Contact Centre £k
Local Education Offices	320	100
SEN	130	0
Student Support	50	to be specified
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>400</b>

5.2 A considerable proportion of the estimated saving is predicated upon a significant transfer of work to the Customer Service Centre. The need to test this hypothesis means that the overall project will need to be phased, with significant savings in 2008/09 (as per the MTFS) but with an appropriately measured approach to the pace at which staffing efficiencies are achieved so as to ensure that service delivery is maintained. This will better enable joint development with the Customer Contact Centre and enable the benefits of the new Integrated Children's System to be factored in as it is implemented.

5.3 The longer term future use of the local education offices as a base for front line support services will be determined by Transformation projects relating to home and remote working and the Bright Office Strategy and by developments in integrated local working and extended services. In the meantime, a reduced but appropriate level of clerical and administrative support will continue to be provided to these staff.

## 6.0 MANAGEMENT OF KEY DEPENDENCIES AND RISKS

6.1 In order for implementation to progress and succeed the following enabling initiatives are being actively managed and overseen by the strategic implementation group.

- provision of a Corporate electronic document records management system (e-DRMS). This will enable the creation and maintenance of electronic records which will mean appropriate access to pupil files (specifically at this stage relating to special educational needs). The Directorate's SEN managers continue to play a significant role in this development for the Council. A preferred provider for the system has now been identified
- the transfer of some front office work from local education offices to the Customer Service Centre
- close alignment with work to implement the new Integrated Children's System (ICS) in the Directorate, a project plan for which is currently being developed
- necessary amendments to existing IT systems so that administrative functions can be delivered from one central base prior to the full implementation of the ICS
- continuing provision of local, face to face access for parents and students where and when appropriate as part of the Public Access Strategy. This will in part be facilitated by the new county wide network of Customer Access Points

6.2 Implementation will put at risk the jobs of a significant number of staff. The Council will make its best efforts to secure the future employment of these staff, where that is their wish. In the meantime, during the development and consultation phase, a key risk is loss of staff prior to implementation of the new model of delivery, allied to difficulties in recruitment. It will be necessary to develop contingency plans so that the current level and quality of service delivery is maintained during this period.

6.3 There is a risk that the public, local Members and schools will perceive the relocation of administrative functions away from local education offices as equating with service removal or reduction. Attention will be given to communication with Members and customers at the launch of the project and during its development and implementation.

## 7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 A consultation meeting was held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2007 for all affected staff in local education offices and at County Hall to consider and discuss the proposal. A proposed staffing structure is now being drawn up for statutory consultation which will commence before the

end of this term and which will involve further meetings with staff. Discussions have been held with UNISON.

## 8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the report be noted.

Cynthia Welbourn  
Corporate Director Children and Young People's Service

*Report prepared by Andrew Terry, Assistant Director, Access and Inclusion*

APT/JR  
16 October 2007

### Background Documents:

- i) Business Process Re-engineering Local Education Office Administration (October 2006)
- ii) Business Process Re-engineering Special Educational Needs (October 2006)
- iii) Business Process Re-engineering Student Support (Draft) (March 2007)
- iv) Implementation of Transformation in PPS Project Definition Document (April 2007)