

'Educating for the future: developing new locality models for English schools'

Pilot 3 – Towards a new model of professional accountability.

Sheffield Action Plan: September 2023 Update

Lead Organisation: Learn Sheffield



Section	Key questions to cover
<p>Aims and objectives <i>See template overleaf</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are you trying to achieve, what is the focus of your project?</i> • <i>How are you addressing the research questions?</i>
<p>1.</p>	<p>We propose two key strands to our plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the development of school report cards (below – strand A) to test how different reported information about a school could provide a more rounded perspective of a school and enhance both the culture of professional accountability and the quality of information for parents, carers and the community. ○ moderated MAT peer review (below – strand B) to support rigorous internal evaluation using external (to the MAT but not the civic partnership) moderation. This will develop a locality framework to support rigorous and supportive accountability and explore how this might promote local professional accountability. <p>Strand A - School Report Cards</p> <p><i>Research questions:</i></p> <p>Can school report cards provide a more rounded perspective of a school and provide high quality information to parents and the community?</p> <p>Can a local area partnership help to develop a culture of 'being accountable' rather than 'being held to account'?</p> <p>Strand B - Moderated MAT Peer Review</p> <p><i>Research questions:</i></p> <p>Can we demonstrate the rigour and accuracy of (MAT) self-evaluation?</p> <p>How can they be used to promote 'professional accountability'?</p>

<p>Leadership and governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How will your project be led and managed?</i> • <i>How will you make decisions and involve other leaders?</i>
<p>2.</p>	<p>The project will be led by Stephen Betts (Chief Executive) with support from other Learn Sheffield colleagues, including Nick Whittaker (Improvement Partner) and Kate Wilkinson (Strategic Analyst).</p> <p>At a local level governance will come through the Learn Sheffield Board, who will receive evaluation reports.</p> <p>The project will also link closely to existing sector led partnership structures in the city, which will act as reference groups: the Primary Improvement Board, the Secondary Partnership and the Special & IR Partnership. The Sheffield MAT Strategy Group will also act as a reference group.</p> <p>Other stakeholders, including Sheffield City Council, will also have the opportunity to participate via these groups, in addition to ongoing dialogue through existing structures for strategic discussion (with officers), reporting and accountability (which includes members).</p> <p>This approach will ensure that the pilot retains a civic dimension whilst starting at small scale. As learning is disseminated and, potentially, the scale expands this will also ensure that understanding of the pilot is city-wide to enable that.</p>
<p>Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Which schools, academies and trusts will work closely on this project?</i> • <i>How will you communicate with other schools, academies and trusts in your local area?</i>
<p>3.</p>	<p>The specific schools, academies and trusts will be identified early in the autumn term (September 2022) – see outline timeline in section 6.</p> <p>Learn Sheffield will use new and established communication channels to keep the city informed about the project. A project mini-website (https://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Projects/Educating-for-the-Future) on the Learn Sheffield website provides a repository for information and outputs about the project. This will then provide the content for regular updates to feed into existing communication platforms: half termly leader briefings, school leader meeting inputs, website news and articles/blogs, social media posts, etc.</p> <p>Strand A - School Report Cards</p> <p><i>Partners:</i> This will involve individual schools (which may be maintained or academies) although we will remain open to a partnership of schools (i.e. a primary locality, a sector partnership or a MAT) expressing an interest to participate as a group. The exploratory nature of this strand (where the specific content will be developed alongside the partners) means that we will recruit using a staged approach. Potential partners will express an interest in the concept, attend a workshop with inputs from Learn Sheffield and pilot leaders and then make a firm expression of interest.</p> <p>Strand B - Moderated MAT Peer Review</p> <p><i>Partners:</i> This will involve local MATs and will be advertised through the MAT Strategy Group (which is being reconvened as a cross-sector partnership in September). The proposed shape of the involvement will be determined from the expressions of interest. This could be as simple as three MATs working as a triad across the sequence of review areas or a more complex pattern to engage greater numbers in a more targeted (to their current priorities) way.</p>

Stakeholders and local groups

- *Who are the other key partners for your project, what other local groups are important to your project?*
- *How will they be engaged?*

The use of existing sector led partnership structures as reference groups will provide regular engagement with the wider sector in the city. These partnership groups are also the existing school improvement infrastructure in the city – including the current categorisation process.

- The Primary Improvement Board includes representatives of the seven primary locality groups. Discussions there will be fed back to each locality group and this will be supported by Learn Sheffield colleagues (typically Stephen Betts) who also attend the half termly meetings.
- The Secondary Partnership includes all secondary and post-16 organisations.
- The Special & IR Partnership includes all special schools and the leaders of Integrated Resource provisions in mainstream settings.
- The Sheffield MAT Strategy Group is currently open to Sheffield based multi-academy trusts – it is being formed as a cross sector group in September, both in the light of the White Paper and also having worked differently during Covid.

4. Sheffield City Council currently commission Learn Sheffield to lead school improvement in the city, including the statutory duties. 2022/23 will be the final year of this commission and so the nature of roles and responsibilities are currently being developed for the future. SCC will remain an important stakeholder and Learn Sheffield will ensure that they are engaged with the project, both through the groups identified above and in other ways as new roles and structures are established.

Learn Sheffield will also seek to develop a specific additional reference group for strand A (report cards) to ensure that we have access to the voice of parents, carers and communities. This will, initially, be developed through the existing routes identified below.

- Parent Carer Forum
- SASGB (Sheffield Association of School Governing Bodies)
- Sheffield City Council’s new community partnership structures – Local Area Committees.

This will ensure that the group has a wider understanding of the project and its objectives which can build over time (rather than being convened as a one off activity). Over time this may be refined to involve parent/carers or community inputs from the specific schools participating in the project or to seek specific or underrepresented inputs.

Wider stakeholder for our project will include other school improvement partners of Learn Sheffield, including the AEPA.

	Enablers and barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the key enablers that are likely to make your project successful?</i> • <i>What are the key barriers that might get in the way?</i>
5.	<p>The strong existing relationships within the sector across the city are a significant enabler. The ability to use an existing school improvement infrastructure, including existing partnership groups as reference groups for the project, is likely to make a significant difference to the success of the project. The qualities of the Learn Sheffield team are also an enabler for the project, both in terms of their reputation with schools (who will therefore seek additional opportunities to work with them) and in terms of the experience they will bring to the strands as they develop. In addition to Jean and Stephen this may include: Nick Whittaker (in relation to inclusion and leadership), Sai Patel (safeguarding and MAT peer review), Peter Heaton & Diane Stokes (primary leadership, including curriculum development).</p> <p>The timing of the removal of the school improvement grant, the change in approach with Sheffield City Council and the White Paper do create some potential barriers and risks for the project. The removal of the grant alongside a change in approach from SCC makes Learn Sheffield more vulnerable and creates uncertainty for schools about how the Sheffield model will operate. The White Paper may exacerbate this uncertainty to a degree but constitutes a greater risk to the project in the sense that it may lead to less MAT collaboration at a point when we were planning to deepen this. Learn Sheffield will include the Educating for the Future Pilot amongst a range of measures which seek to mitigate these risks and use the uncertainty as a rallying call for greater collaboration.</p>	

	Activities, timetable and milestones (September 2023 Update)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are you going to do? What are the key building blocks of your work over the next 2 years?</i> • <i>How are you going to engage schools and trusts in each of these activities?</i>
6.	<p>The initial timeline (introduction, recruitment, launch and early evaluation activities) is set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spring/Summer 2022 – Educating for the Future pilot (and subsequently Sheffield’s participation) has been introduced; to the Learn Sheffield Board, across partnership groups (all sectors), through leader and governance briefings and via other LS comms. ○ September 2022 – recruitment process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strand A (Report Cards) - advertise for initial expressions of interest and attendance at a (mid-September) workshop with Christine Gilbert, followed by formal expression of interest deadline and final recruitment in early October. Strand B (MAT Peer Review) - advertise for formal expressions of interest with final recruitment in early October. ○ Early October – baseline survey (online). ○ October 2022 (before half term) – Sheffield launch (including the formal launch of the mini-website) and focussed input into LS comms. ○ Mid-November – first evaluation workshop involving (circa) six major stakeholders. 	

Activities in both pilot strands will commence in October 2022 to ensure that there is at least a full 12 months of activity before the analysis and reporting stage of the pilot begins in January 2024. The MAT Peer Review strand was subsequently paused (in spring 2023) to enable a focus on the report card strand of work.

In addition to the external pilot evaluation, local reporting and communications will seek to identify and magnifying emerging learning and case studies to support wider system development. This will include regular inputs to the reference groups and wider civic discussions. The timeline for this aspect of the project will be shaped by further discussions with the evaluation team from the University of Nottingham (Professor Toby Greany and Dr Susan Cousin).

Strand A - School Report Cards

Activities (following recruitment):

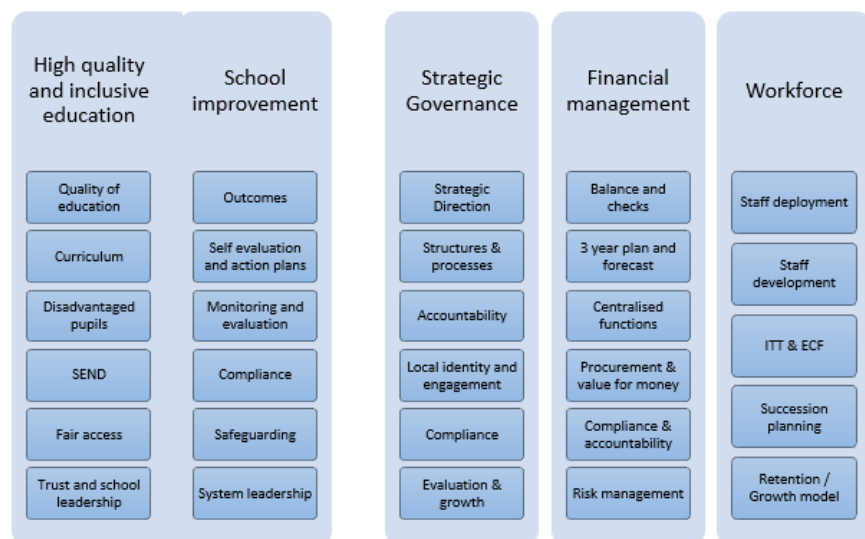
- The disposition and attitudes of the key stakeholders (in conjunction with the pilot evaluation team) was baselined in autumn 2022.
- A series of five workshops took place throughout 2022/23: 29 September, 15 November, 3 March, 15 May & 10 July.
- The workshops were also punctuated by working group sessions to focus specific areas of work or potential aspects of reporting.
- Informal reference groups (including the parent/governor/community groups) have been used but this has utilised existing groups and relationships rather than those developed specifically for this project (as was originally envisaged) to provide input and feedback.
- Learn Sheffield has positioned this work as part of a wider data analysis development and therefore been able to develop the report card as an actual tool, linked to data collection and able to be generated for a participating setting.
- We will develop a series of 'sprint' approaches to autumn 2023 testing with both engaged and non-engaged (in the project) settings plus key stakeholders – this will enable us to test the template version as a whole and in specific aspects.
- Once content has been agreed in principle with the steering group (December 2023) there will be a build and test phase in spring 2024.
- We will continue to use the UNICEF TOC – product evaluation is followed by going back to the (step 0) motivation step – the momentum can then come through the fresh buy in of school leaders (which is easier with a product than with a concept or a problem to solve) once the product is ready to share – working assumption is that this will be February or March 2024.
- We are specifically developing, for and alongside this, an approach to accessing the voice of pupils, their families (and potentially staff) – with a view to being able to analyse this in the way that we would other school improvement data (i.e. connected to contextual pupil information to enable analysis for specific groups and intersectional barriers).
- We are holding a workshop with the Cynefin Institute in October 2023 to explore different approaches.
- We are also, in parallel, developing the data tool to include the functionality to create, deliver and analyse questionnaires. We would like this functionality to be included in any wider launch in February or March 2024.
- We will revisit the disposition and attitudes of the key stakeholders (in conjunction with the pilot evaluation team) in spring 2024.

Strand B - Moderated MAT Peer Review

Activities (following recruitment):

- The disposition and attitudes of the key stakeholders (in conjunction with the pilot evaluation team) was baselined in autumn 2022.
- We recruited MAT partners as planned in October 2022 but delayed the process of agreeing a programme of strand reviews (based on the proposed framework below) due to lack of capacity.
- We plan to revisit this process in October 2023 to re-establish a pilot group of local MATS.
- We plan to carry out strand reviews (including agreement of lines of enquiry, external moderation and report) and collect agreed feedback (developed in conjunction with the pilot evaluation team) from November 2023 onwards. This should include a focus on the extent to which the model is formative (improving) as well as summative (proving).
- We will reflect with key participants and stakeholders on the capacity of moderated peer MAT review process to contribute to civic (moral) or professional accountability rather than simply contractual accountability in spring 2024. Recommendations about the evidence base that is used to inform strand reviews (in particular the engagement of teachers, pupils, parents/carers & community in those covering quality and inclusivity of education, school improvement and workforce development will influence the purpose and impact of future collaboration.
- Revisit the disposition and attitudes of the key stakeholders (in conjunction with the pilot evaluation team) in spring 2024.

Additional note: Learn Sheffield Trust Review



- This model was updated in March 2022 to accommodate the definition of a 'strong trust' linked to the publication of the Schools White Paper.
- The five areas form four strands of enquiry and have been further developed to reflect the latest language and focus.
- The model assumes each peer will host a review in each area in the order that best reflects their priorities, within a cycle of up to two years (dependent upon the groupings and timescales determined by the partners. This will be modified for this pilot to comply with timescales.
- Each short review will involve peers and an external (Learn Sheffield employed or commissioned) partner following lines of enquiry agreed by the host.
- The purpose of the reviews will be to identify good practice and areas for development through a collaborative process; the review process will not result in a specific judgement or grading.

Success criteria and data/evidence collection (September 2023 Update)

- *How will you review change and impact, what do you expect to happen?*
- *What evidence and data will you collect and when?*
- *How will you evaluate the success of the project?*

Strand A - School Report Cards

Impact Review:

Our hypothesis is that a report card which provides a rounded overview of a school will; provide parents/carers with better quality information & enhance the professional culture of the school by providing greater individual responsibility and collective expectation (of strengths and areas for development).

During the first year of the project this has translated into the development of two 'products'. An externally focussed report card for parents, carers and the wider community and an internally focussed data analysis tool which supports school leaders to use more accurate self-evaluation as a tool for improvement.

Evidence & Evaluating Success:

We will seek to demonstrate the impact of the report card by exploring the perspectives of those outside and within each participating school, in addition to the perspectives of the reference group (which is external to the participating schools).

7.

The external perspectives (from both the parents/carers of the participating schools and the wider reference group) will focus on the extent to which the report card provides a more rounded perspective of a school and higher quality information to parents and the community.

The internal perspectives will focus on the extent to which the report card supports the development a culture of 'being accountable' rather than 'being held to account'. This will be further enhanced by the internal data tool which will support self-evaluation.

In both cases the development of stronger tools to support the understanding of leaders about the way that their setting is experienced (by pupil, families and other stakeholders) will be key to the longer term impact of this work.

Report Cards - success looks like:

- Internal product being widely used by individual schools, groups of schools and at least one locality partnership (i.e. Sheffield) – better (quality and efficiency) needs analysis leading to better strategy and a greater sense of professional accountability.
- External product being widely used across the system – better information for parents/carers alongside enhanced professional culture (responsibility and expectation).
- Ideally funded – either through by a further project, a new civic partnership or a commercial offer in order to ensure further development beyond the project, in particular in relation to the orle of voice in improvement.

Strand B - Moderated MAT Peer Review

Impact Review:

Our hypothesis is that rigorous and accurate self-evaluation is the basis of successful organisational improvement. Citing this process within a collaborative local-area partnership which supports the process to use agreed criteria, peer reflection and external moderation and input, adds value to this process. We believe that this will enable our partnership to explore the civic and professional accountability of each MAT community and seek to embed a strong shared conception of this

Evidence & Evaluating Success:

We will seek to demonstrate the rigour and accuracy of (MAT) self-evaluation and then explore how this can be used to develop and promote civic and professional accountability. We propose three areas of evaluation:

- Track the disposition and attitudes of stakeholders (in conjunction with the pilot evaluation team) as a baseline, through the activities and summatively – this will support evaluation of the perspectives of those involved in the process.
- Monitor changes in the headline published information relating to the MAT to provide a context to the performance of the MAT – this will provide (a limited but potentially relevant) early evaluation of process impact.
- We will commission a sample external review for the purpose of comparison with the local model – this will support our evaluation of the accuracy of the process.

MAT Peer Review - success looks like...

- Testing and development of activity has informed an agreed local approach to inform and improve rigorous MAT self-evaluation, leading to organisational improvement.
- Case study evidence will demonstrate efficacy of the approach.
- The partnership commitment to further work will demonstrate impact on organisations.