

## **Models**

### ***Background***

OfSTED highlighted the need for Northumberland to find innovative solutions to their surplus places and innovation is a key element of Building Schools for the future. With this in mind NEAG has been working with a wide range of individuals and organisations to develop innovative solutions. There has also been input and financial support from the DfES Innovations Unit for some of the work on innovative ideas in Northumberland.

Many of the innovative ideas and models developed over the last 18 months have been fed into Northumberland County Council. None of the innovative solutions or alternative models has been commented on by the LEA in their report to Councillors.

Some of the ideas are briefly outlined below although this list is not exhaustive and many of these ideas have been further expanded in communications with Northumberland County Council. Some have met with positive responses from all concerned and will be developed further with the involvement of all parties, including the Innovations Unit at the DfES.

### **Combining Pyramid functions**

There are many ways that pyramid functions could be combined to create greater efficiency and produce a streamlined system. Some ideas include combining functions so issues like ICT support technicians, site maintenance, and other functions are combined across a pyramid. This could improve efficiency, compatibility, and lead to increased service delivery at reduced cost.

### **Further Education in Rural Areas**

The difficulty in delivering Post-16 education in rural areas of Northumberland was highlighted by the Learning and Skills Council in their STAR consultation document. This is very noticeable with little or no provision for the types of courses required in rural areas. Many adults and teenagers have to travel to Newcastle to obtain suitable Post-16 education. The availability of specialist classrooms and facilities in Middle schools provides an ideal opportunity for the Learning and Skills Council to be delivering suitable Post-16 education to rural areas. This combined with high technology solutions enabled by an enhanced telecommunications infrastructure allows a range of exciting innovative delivery mechanisms to be implemented across Northumberland.

Another innovative idea would be to combine school and College provision on High School sites to deliver both A-levels and vocational education directed at employment opportunities in the local area. This would cater for the needs of local businesses and due to the flexibility of the premises would allow a fluid provision of on-demand education and deliver lifelong learning.

### **Parent led Academies**

Academies are extremely controversial and parents, teachers, and County councillors are against them in principle. To implement the proposed *Putting the Learner First* strategy requires several Academies to be implemented in Northumberland. An alternative to the existing Academies would be Parent led Academies where the local people decide what is required, with the support of a District Council and local businesses. This would provide a delivery mechanism that meets the needs of local people and develops an Academy that works in harmony with needs.

### **On-demand Training**

One of the many issues is the changing nature of education over the years. Each new trend introduces a new learning requirement. Traditional delivery mechanisms have difficulty adapting to the demands of the modern workplace. The existing schools are in an ideal place to use some of their spare capacity so it can be utilised for on-demand training. This is especially

appropriate for rural areas where it is often difficult to find suitable premises and/or trainers. With innovative delivery solutions enabled by an improved telecommunications infrastructure the existing schools are well placed to deliver on-demand training. This is already being done for worldwide training needs by companies in rural Northumberland and would provide an excellent innovative solution to many training needs.

### **School Board**

Establishing a School's Board with the purpose of setting and monitoring the services provided by Northumberland LEA. OfSTED was highly critical of the leadership provided by the LEA. The School Board would help to ensure the services provided by the LEA would meet the requirements of those who use the services.

### **Foundation School**

Foundation schools could be used to deliver the needs of the parents and teachers. Opting out of the LEA controlled system would enable a better service to be delivered to those that count.

### **Contracted Services**

Looking at contracting services required by schools on a national basis. This would ensure that Schools could get the best possible service by competitive tender for things like target setting, SEN provision, etc.

### **Monitoring standards**

There should be an independent process of monitoring standards on a year-by-year basis.

### **Pyramid wide Curriculum body**

There should be a process of setting curriculum needs across the whole pyramid ensuring a smoother transition of pupils through the system. This would involve setting the curriculum, deciding on how to deliver the curriculum and teachers sharing experience across the 3-tiers. Teachers would transfer between First, Middle & High schools enabling additional specialisms to be introduced and developed.

### **Innovative use of learning villages**

Innovative use of learning villages throughout Northumberland to deliver lifelong learning with cradle to the grave provision provided for, and within the communities that require the education the facilities. Assistance across the various learning villages can be enhanced by the rapidly evolving telecommunications infrastructure Northumberland.

### **A Parent Board**

This involves a parent led board to develop education in conjunction with the schools and education.

### **Parent support units**

The establishment of parent support units to deliver a step change in the parental involvement over the next 10-15 years to establish a culture *Learning for Life*. Involving parents and grandparents in the day to day education of children to understand and develop new skills for all ages.

### **Amalgamate single entry First schools.**

This would involve the closure of single entry first schools where they are relatively close together and enable the freeing of school sites and at the same time increasing the cost-effectiveness of the remaining First schools.