

# AEPA – Building Effective Partnerships

## Sharing Solutions Workshop

**Noble aims and keeping afloat: how  
to ensure a commercial approach**

**Stephen Betts**  
Chief Executive, Learn Sheffield

AEPA – Building Effective Partnerships

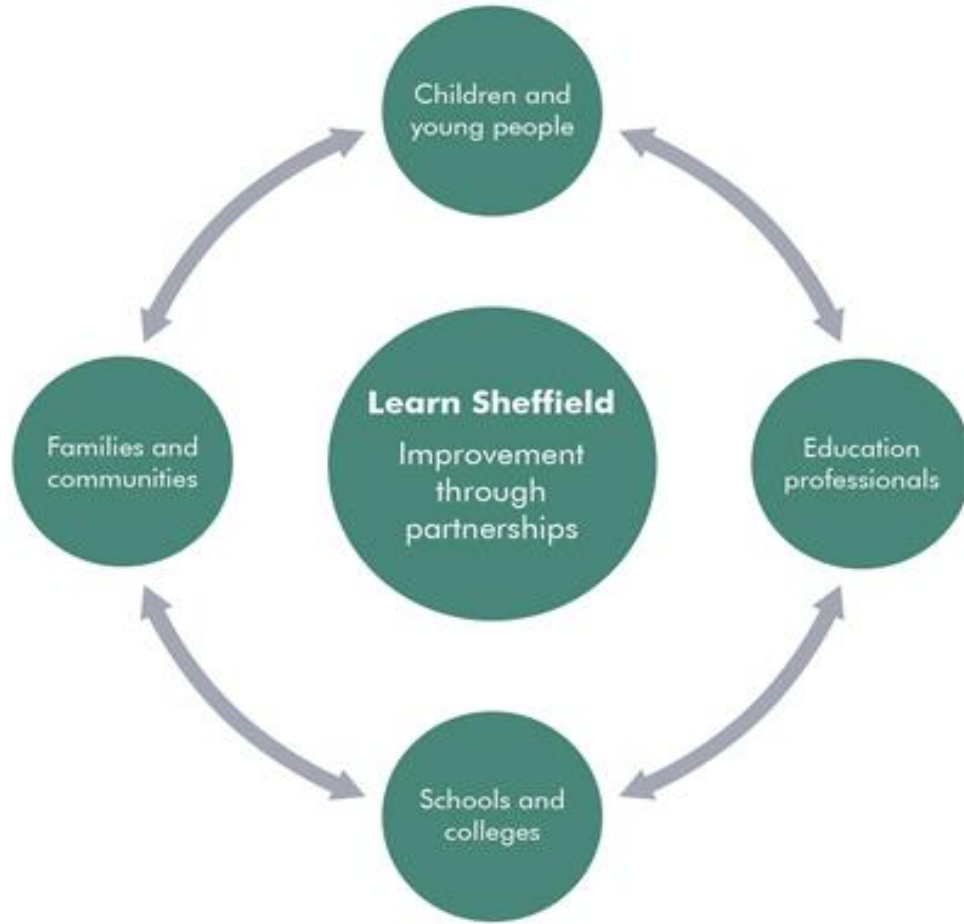
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# The background to Learn Sheffield

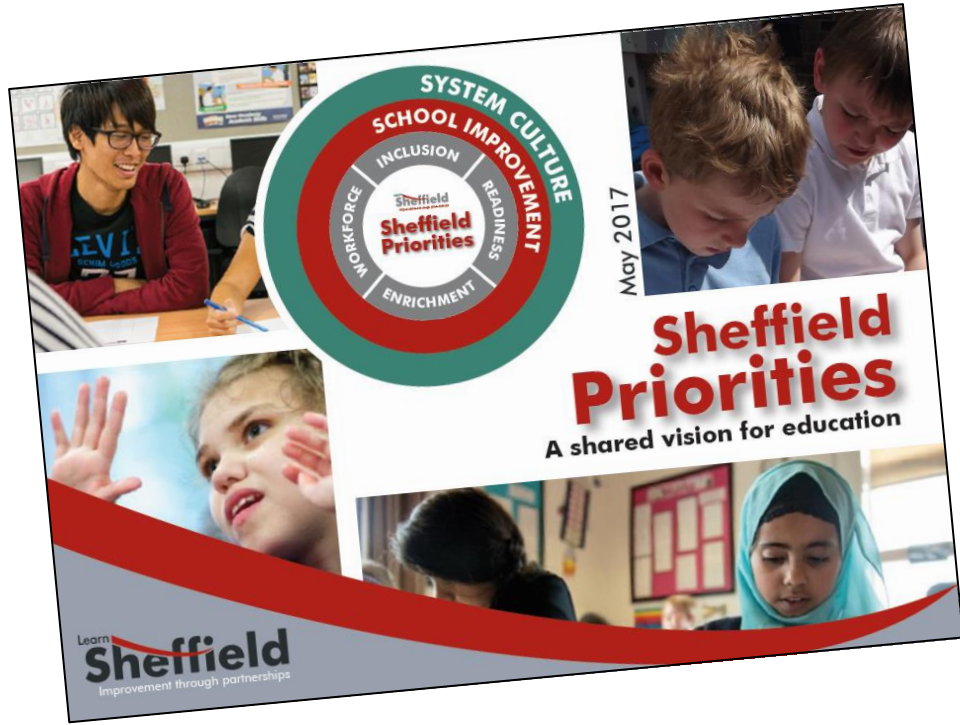
## *- some things it may be helpful to know*

# Learn Sheffield Overview



- Not for profit Schools Company.
- 80% owned by Sheffield schools/colleges.
- 20% owned by Sheffield City Council.
- Governance via a Board – nominations from each category of member plus four co-opted Directors.
- Membership includes all sectors and types of publically funded education.
- Membership currently 100% (2 nursery, 134 primary, 10 special, 1 PRU, 28 secondary and 2 colleges)

# Learn Sheffield Overview



- Formed following recommendation of a working party tasked with considering the future approach to school improvement.
- Purpose – school improvement and approach is ‘improvement through partnership (school-led system).
- Strategic vision – takes a wide view of improvement – reflected in the Sheffield Priorities.
- Impact measures (currently) focus on school improvement: partnership outcomes, school outcomes, pupil outcomes & outcomes for vulnerable pupils.

# Learn Sheffield Overview



- Core funding – school improvement commission of £860k pa for three years (2015-2018) from SCC.
- Current core funding – smaller commission (£320k pa for further three years plus £185k transitional funding) now supplemented by school subscription.
- Other funding growing but still limited - turnover has grown from just over £1m to £1.5m (2018/19 budget).
- Core staff team grown but still small – CEO, school improvement partners (less than 5 FTE), business/ admin (3 FTE) & Governance team (just over 3FTE).
- Other services bought in or accessed through partnerships.

**Year 1  
(2015-2016)**

Establishing  
Learn  
Sheffield

- ✓ Presence (building, website, etc.)
- ✓ Commission delivery (continuity)
- ✓ Analysis & Development

**Years 2-3  
(2016-2018)**

Building a  
platform

**Year 4-6  
(2018-2021)**

Growth & impact (informed by Peer Review)

- ✓ Commission delivery (new approaches)
- ✓ School Improvement Strategy
- ✓ Sheffield Priorities & development programmes
- ✓ Negotiation & transfer process
- ✓ Incremental growth



## Learn Sheffield Peer Review

### Many Positives

“We were highly impressed by the terrific work that is happening in Sheffield. The approach of Learn Sheffield, particularly given the size and stature of the city, makes it a standard bearer for partnerships everywhere. The very high level of engagement from schools is testimony to the inclusive approach that has been developed. The City Council, the education sector and everyone involved in Learn Sheffield should be very proud of what they have achieved to date and excited about the platform they have for the future.”

Christine Gilbert (July 2018)

### Clear Recommendations

We recommend that Learn Sheffield builds on its many strengths by:

- Strengthening its vision and new strategy
- Building and strengthening system leadership across Sheffield
- Giving a harder edge to its intervention model
- Doing more to demonstrate progress and impact
- **Producing a strategy for financial sustainability**

## **Year 4-6**

**(2018-2021)**

Growth & impact  
(informed by Peer  
Review)

- ✓ Commission & subscription delivery
- ✓ School Imp. Strategy
- ✓ Sheffield Priorities
- ✓ Accelerated growth
- ✓ System leadership development

## **Years 2-3**

**(2016-2018)**

Building a  
platform

- ✓ Commission delivery (new approaches)
- ✓ School Improvement Strategy
- ✓ Sheffield Priorities & development programmes
- ✓ Negotiation & transfer process
- ✓ Incremental growth

## **Year 1**

**(2015-2016)**

Establishing  
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- ✓ Presence (building, website, etc.)
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**The lessons of Learn Sheffield**  
*- some things it may be helpful to consider!*

# Learn Sheffield Lessons

- Sheffield didn't go for the 'big bang' approach of starting with a wide ranging suite of services to schools.
- Positives: focus on school improvement & partnership development plus the advantages of connectivity and being perceived as 'our organisation'.
- Negatives: significant (and distracting) sustainability questions, the limitations which come with lack of scale and the missing (unaffordable/absent) expertise in some key areas.
- The proportion of turnover that comes directly from SCC commissions has fallen from 85% to just over 40% (current year budget) but the proportion which relates to school improvement remains very significant (fallen from 88% to 73%).
- The challenge of needing capacity to facilitate growth but needing growth to afford capacity is very similar to the one faced by MATs.

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# The next phase of Learn Sheffield *- the role of commercial development*

## Learn Sheffield Peer Review

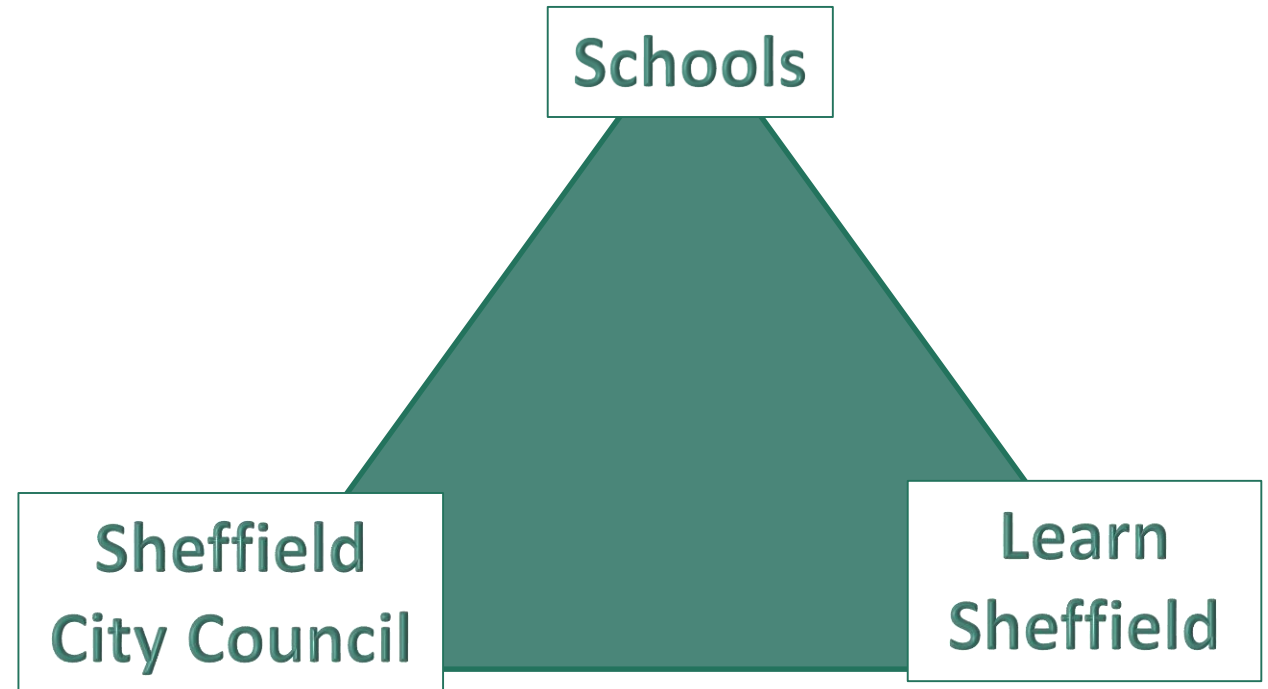
Recommendations	Notes	Strategy
Strengthening its vision and new strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More explicit and ambitious focus on higher standards</li> <li>• Emphasis on curriculum</li> <li>• Post-16 education focus</li> </ul>	Updated versions of School Improvement Strategy & Sheffield Priorities
Building and strengthening system leadership across Sheffield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using practitioners from all schools, MATs, TSAs, etc. to support improvement</li> <li>• Reduce reliance on small team</li> <li>• Develop strategy for developing BAME leaders/governors</li> </ul>	System Leadership Development
Giving a harder edge to its intervention model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust challenge in localities</li> <li>• Ensure poor progress and performance are not allowed to run for too long</li> </ul>	School Improvement Strategy 2018-21
Doing more to demonstrate progress and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater use of metrics and targets</li> <li>• Forensic analysis of progress and performance within and across localities</li> <li>• Use of case studies of impact (including evaluation of the partnership itself)</li> </ul>	Clarity about impact and stop being Sheffield's best kept secret.
Producing a strategy for financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subscription must be delivered successfully but not become all-consuming</li> <li>• Commercial strategy needed to identify additional services and products to increase revenue</li> </ul>	<b>Deliver subscription &amp; grow Learn Sheffield</b>

# School Improvement Financial Model

**2015-2018 Commission Funded**  
*3 Year Commission (£860k pa)*



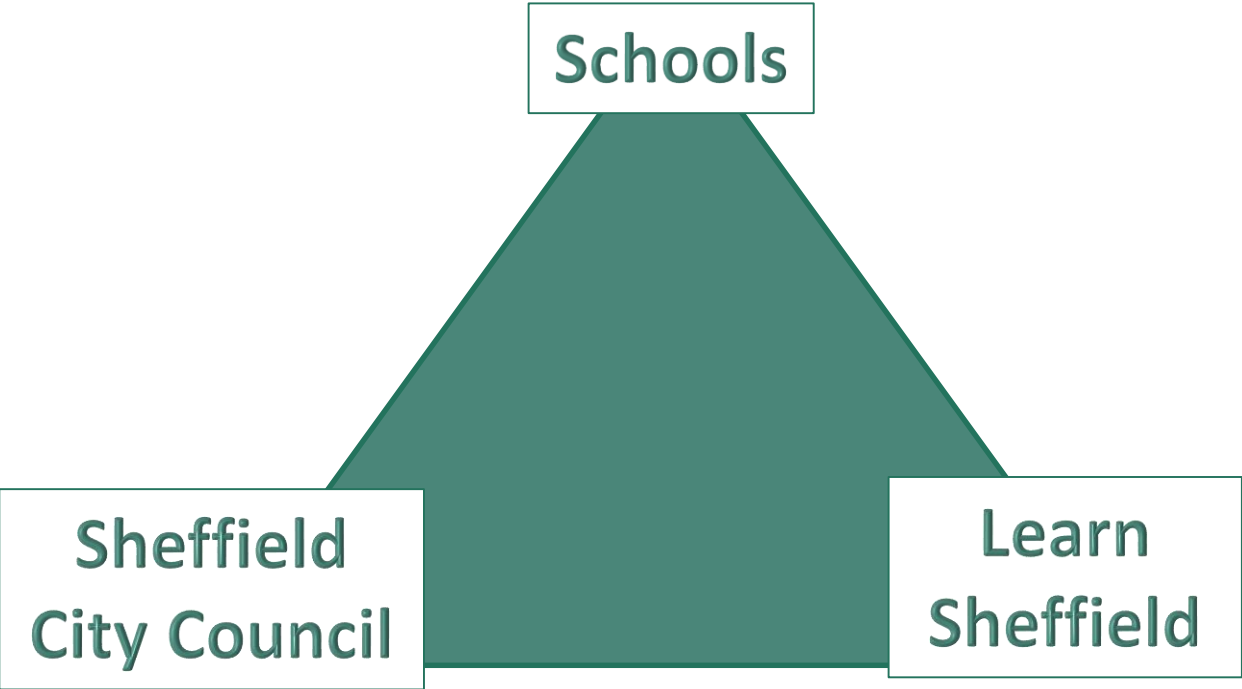
**2018-2021 Commission & Subscription Funded**  
*3 Year Commission (£320k pa)*



# School Improvement Financial Model

## 2018-2021 Commission & Subscription Funded

3 Year Commission (£320k pa) + transitional funding

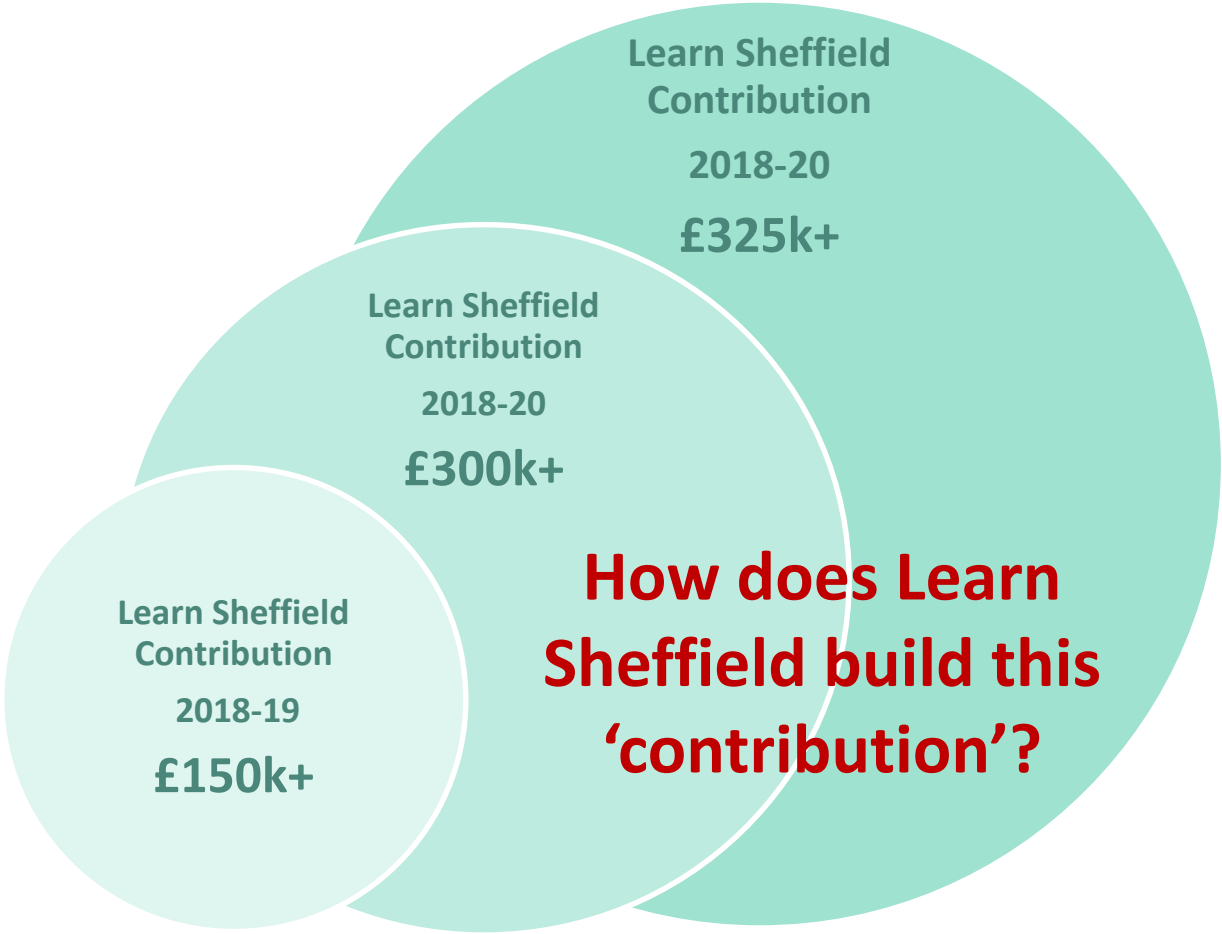


	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Schools	£465k	£500k	£535k
SCC	£505k	£320k	£320k
Learn Sheffield	£150k	£300k	£325k
Total	£1120k	£1120k	£1160k

- School income based on retaining subscribers.
- Transitional funding is front loaded.
- Learn Sheffield contribution growth is key.

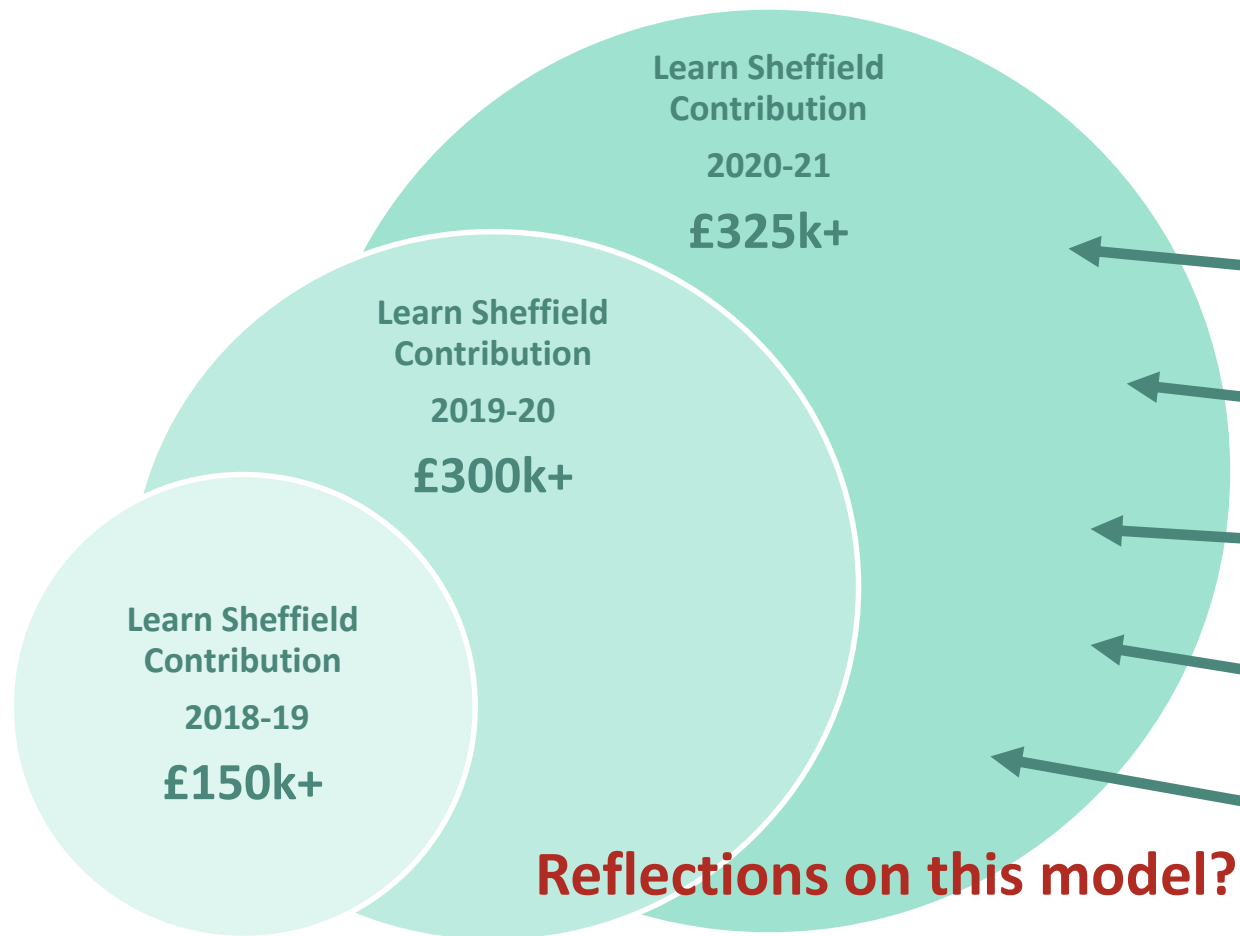
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# Learn Sheffield Financial Model – Contribution to Core Activity



Each department in the Learn Sheffield budget could make a contribution to the core business/activity:

- **Service management fee**  
(e.g. 5-8% of service turnover)
- **Service budget surplus**  
(e.g. profit re-invested into core activity)
- **Services 'beyond' subscription**  
(e.g. 'net' income generated in addition)
- **Project management fee**  
(e.g. Food Strategy £9k offset costs)
- **Product sales or royalties**  
(e.g. STAT 'net' income £50k)

## Learn Sheffield Board Away Day

## Session A: Growth & Development of the Company

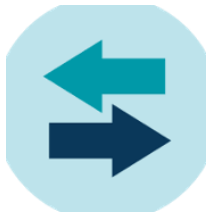
- **What does our intelligence tell us about the opportunities and gaps?**
  - ✓ Our reach into schools and wider partnerships is our competitive advantage – this includes horizon scanning, customer feedback and understanding of decision making processes within our customer base.

Our current gap analysis includes services relating to;

- ❖ Flexible and responsive school improvement capacity (i.e. external expertise)
- ❖ Leadership (and also teaching/wider staff) capacity (i.e. boots on the ground)
- ❖ SEND and Inclusion support and services
- ❖ CYP Mental Health services and intervention expertise
- ❖ Infrastructure – including financial planning

## Learn Sheffield Board Away Day

- **What are our delivery models?** ‘Commissions, Projects, Products and Services’  
... other examples and variations?



‘Service Transfer’

*Examples –*  
Governance  
PESOL  
School Food



‘Start-up Service’

*Examples –*  
School Improvement  
Communications  
Data Analysis



‘Partnership / Joint Venture’

*Examples –*  
GDPR  
Mental Health  
Young Carers



‘Partnership / Sub-contract’

*Examples –*  
Recruitment  
HR  
Website & Design

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# The challenges for Learn Sheffield *- some difficult questions to answer*

# Learn Sheffield Challenges

- Deliver a subscription without it being ‘all-consuming’
- Continue to provide support and challenge to every school/academy when a small proportion don’t subscribe and contribute to the system that challenges them.
- Find genuine clarity between commissioned and traded work.
- Balance the tensions of a customer relationship and a ‘support and challenge’ relationship with the same schools/academies.
- Understand where to focus our energy and capacity to secure the growth we need – balance risks associated with working with a partner with (slow and uncertain) political decision making structures.
- Balancing sensitivities (and brand dependencies) in having a more commercial mind-set.
- Making the transition from ‘start-up’ to ‘professional’ company culture – compliance, procedures, quality of evaluation/impact measurement, etc.

# Commercial Challenges

- Finding activity that will have positive impact on both educational and financial performance is difficult.

*We need to balance these moral and commercial imperatives and even when we find something that does both we may find tensions in choosing how to deliver it.*

- Huge pressure on school budgets – the ‘pie’ isn’t getting bigger.

*We need to think about what the pie is spent on as well as how much is spent with us!*

- Increased fragmentation means our customers are very varied.
- The sector landscape continues to shift and change.

*This makes forward planning difficult but also creates an opportunity for the organisation that is perceived as a trusted partner, horizon scanner, guide, etc.*

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