



‘Educating for the future: developing new locality models for English schools’ - an invitation to local areas to pilot new approaches to locality working

Introduction

The AEC Trust and BELMAS sponsored research on ‘Developing New Locality Models for English Schools’ which was published in March 2021 – you can find the final report [here](#). A key finding of the research, drawing on four leading international systems, was that in Michael Fullan’s words ‘Leadership from the Middle’ through locality-based governance and partnership working is key to building school systems that can deliver excellence and equity.

Role of the pilots

The research underlined the importance of locality working and made a number of recommendations to strengthen the role played by locality-based partnerships. The AEC Trust now want to explore piloting three approaches drawn from the recommendations which have received the most interest and support. They open up the opportunity to develop ways to improve the support for vulnerable pupils, individual schools and academy trusts, and explore new locality models for the future. The three pilots are highlighted below and more detail on the issues to be explored under each is included later in this document.

- Pilot 1 – Support for Vulnerable Young People
- Pilot 2 – Exploring the potential of working across Combined or Sub-Regional Authorities as the basis for supporting the improvement of all schools
- Pilot 3 – Toward a new model of accountability: strengthening professional accountability, including school self-evaluation, teacher and school development, and reporting, within the overall framework of a locality partnership focused on improvement across the local area.

Timeline

The pilots will run for 2 years from April 2022 until April 2024 and a final report on learning from the pilots will be published.

Support available

The project will be led and overseen by Jonathan Crossley-Holland, one of the authors of the original research. In addition:

- support for implementation and action research facilitation will be provided by Ben Bryant, Simon Day and Simon Rea from Isos Partnership. They will provide advice and guidance to individual local areas throughout the set-up and life of each pilot as well as bringing together the local areas for each pilot to maximise the opportunities for learning between local areas.
- Local areas taking forward pilot 3 on developing new models of professional accountability will also be supported by Christine Gilbert acting as a quality and development adviser to these areas.
- There will be an independent external review of locality working as demonstrated by the pilots, reporting after the end of the first year and at the end of the Project.
- The Trust has set up a website to promote the work of the pilots and communication between them. This will be launched when the pilots are selected in March.
- The project will be overseen by a Steering Group of national partners (see below).

The support team

Jonathan Crossley-Holland was a teacher, and a Director of Children's Services for Sheffield for 12 years, for which he received an Honorary Doctorate from Sheffield Hallam University. Subsequently he was Director of strategy for the Tribal group. He is vice-chair of Minerva Learning Trust. Since leaving Tribal he has worked on the middle tier in education through consultancy and research. His most recent piece of research has been with Dr Susan Cousin on developing a new locality model for English schools funded by the AEC Trust and BELMAS which drew on international best practice and views from leading figures from across the system. This research underpins the Pilots, which is also funded by the AEC Trust which was encouraged to do so by the reception it received.

Christine Gilbert will, with the assistance of Isos Partnership, lead the support for the three accountability pilots as the Quality and Development Advisor. Currently a visiting professor at UCL Institute of Education, Christine has been a headteacher, Director of Education first in Harrow and then Tower Hamlets, and a chief executive in two London boroughs. Between 2006 and 2011, Christine held the post of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, when she brought three different organisations together to create a new organisation. She is currently involved in a range of education projects, including supporting the development of place-based, education partnerships. She is the independent chair of Camden Learning, a local partnership and co-chairs the national organisation (AEPA).

You can find more information about Isos Partnership at www.isospartnership.com including details of the three Directors who will be involved in supporting the pilots, [Ben Bryant](#), [Simon Day](#) and [Simon Rea](#).

Role of the Steering Group

The Steering Group is seen as having a key role in the development of the project in advising on the policies and pilot selection, on monitoring the progress of the pilots, and helping to publicize the work of the Pilots and the findings. The members of the Steering Group are listed below:

Paul Whiteman (NAHT), Julie McCulloch (ASCL), Kirston Nelson (ADCS), Emma Knights (NGA), Ian Keating (LGA), John Jolly (Parentkind), Shaun Brown (The Difference), Sue John (Challenge Partners), Alan Parker (AEC Trust).

What will we be asking of pilot areas?

Areas that are selected for the pilots will be asked to identify a nominated lead for the pilot who will be the day-to-day contact for Jonathan, Christine and Isos partnership to work with. We will be looking to local areas to support the implementation of the pilots through bringing together school leaders and other local partners on a regular basis. As part of the selection process we will need you to demonstrate support from schools, academy trusts, the LA and other agencies taking part. We will also be looking to you to help identify and collect data and other information that demonstrates the progress the pilots are making.

Isos Partnership would like to engage with local areas on a monthly basis and will also be bringing all local areas involved in pilots together on a six-monthly basis to reflect on progress across local areas. We will also ask local areas to participate in the external evaluation of the pilots at regular points during the two years.

What will local areas get from participating in the pilots?

The pilots will provide local areas with an opportunity to contribute to and influence the national debate around these issues, to take their own partnership work to the next level with support and advice from credible experts and regular opportunities to learn from other local areas, as well as access to independent external evaluation and opportunities to promote and share learning through a national website and other partners supporting the project.

How to apply

We are interested in applications from local authorities or local education partnerships working with schools, academy trusts and other local partners to develop new locality models. Local areas can apply for any of the pilots but will only be selected for one. In relation to pilot 2 we would welcome applications from combined or sub-regional authorities with established accountability and governance arrangements. We aim to select up to three local areas for each pilot and will be looking to achieve a balance of local areas in terms of size, geography, and levels of deprivation. You should complete the application form at the end of this pack for each of the pilots you want to apply for. Applications should be sent to jcrossleyholland1@gmail.com by 11th February. We may ask for further information from local areas and/or ask to discuss your proposal further with you. We expect to finalise the selection of pilots by 11th March.

Pilot 1 – Support for Vulnerable Young People

Summary of this pilot

We want to work with local areas to help build the collective responsibility of schools, academy trusts, and other agencies for the progress of vulnerable young people. The aim would be to explore how local areas can create stronger oversight and transparency for the progress of vulnerable young people and develop an effective action plan to strengthen the response to the major additional challenges created by COVID and improve support and outcomes for them.

How would this pilot work?

In each local area involved, we would aim to work with the local authority, local education partnership, if there is one, schools, academy trusts and other agencies to define what is meant by “vulnerability” to identify the cohort at risk of being marginalised and missing out on access to education and how best to measure their progress and outcomes. We would expect local areas to identify specific priorities and preventative approaches which might be taken forward across the whole local area or within identified localities. We want to test locality approaches that will:

- Develop an agreed locality-wide definition of vulnerability that moves beyond pre-existing labels to identify a broad cohort of young people vulnerable to being marginalised and missing out on education
- Test the right set of metrics for tracking the progress and outcomes of this cohort
- Explore what are the most effective preventative strategies available to localities in working with schools and academy trusts to support these groups of young people
- Strengthen partnerships between all agencies and explore opportunities through collaboration to enrich the offer including reasonable adjustments to the curriculum
- Share successful practice in supporting these young people and identify the benefits and challenges of working as a locality in implementing the agreed action plan

What are some of the questions we want to explore through this pilot?

- What outcomes do local areas identify as most important for different cohorts of young people? How can local areas best track progress against these outcomes?
- What are the preventative strategies that are most successful in working with schools, academy trusts, LAs and other partners across a locality to support vulnerable young people?
- How has locality working strengthened partnership working and collective responsibility for vulnerable young people?
- Has locality working enabled services for these young people to be re-configured in ways that better reflect local needs?
- How can locality working help to engage parents and young people in identifying vulnerability and preventative strategies that support them?
- What are the main benefits of locality working in supporting vulnerable young people? What are the main challenges you have encountered as a locality?
- Are there any structural, legislative or wider cultural barriers that create obstacles to achieving the pilot objectives? If so, what could central and/or local government do to remove those obstacles?

What conditions might be useful to have in place for a local area to work on this pilot?

- Commitment to the principle of collective responsibility for improving the outcomes for vulnerable learners across the local area/local partnership
- Engagement of the majority of schools and academy trusts in the work to define what is meant by vulnerability and agreeing the metrics for reporting progress
- Interest and commitment from schools, academy trusts , the LA and other partners in working on a whole-locality basis to develop and test different preventative strategies and approaches

Pilot 2 – Exploring the potential of working across Combined or Sub-Regional Authorities as the basis for supporting the improvement of all schools

Summary of this pilot

We want to work with combined or sub-regional authorities (areas where there are existing accountability arrangements for working across authorities) who are interested in developing a school improvement arrangement capable of supporting schools across multiple local authorities. The aim would be to test the conditions needed to establish such a model successfully and to explore the advantages and disadvantages of organising on this basis.

How would this pilot work?

We would want to work with local authorities, local education partnerships and school and academy trust leaders across combined or sub-regional authorities to explore how a combined model of school improvement could support all schools and academy trusts across multiple local authority areas to improve and be based on the principles of collaboration and open sharing of good practice. We want to test local approaches that will:

- Explore the scope of what a model working across multiple local authority areas should cover including models of support and challenge and sharing good practice
- Engage schools and academy trusts across the region in the new arrangements
- Test how any new arrangements fit with other regional structures and partnerships and the opportunity to join-up with work in other areas e.g. skills/health/transport
- Develop appropriate governance and membership arrangements for the new model
- Test the capacity needed to facilitate and co-ordinate delivery across the new model
- Explore the costs of delivering such a model and options available for funding

What are some of the questions we want to explore through this pilot?

- What are the main advantages and disadvantages of the new model from the perspective of local authorities, local education partnerships, schools, academy trusts and other stakeholders?
- Where does the capacity for supporting schools come from under the new model?
- What is the role of academy trusts and regional teaching school hubs in providing support?
- How have opportunities for improvement and quality of any support changed?
- What school improvement activities and conversations happen at different levels of the new arrangements e.g. at regional level, at local level, at cluster or school level? Does this vary by phase/type of school?
- What are the costs for individual local authorities, schools and academy trusts? How does that compare to existing arrangements for school improvement support?
- What are the benefits of working at this level in terms of reflecting the importance of place and connections to other regional bodies and priorities?
- Do local communities within the combined or sub-regional area feel like they have a voice in the new arrangements? How does this connect to continued local accountability?
- Are there any structural, legislative or wider cultural barriers that create obstacles to achieving the pilot objectives? If so, what could central and/or local government do to remove those obstacles?

What conditions might be useful to have in place for a local area to work on this pilot?

- Commitment and interest in developing a new model of school improvement from local authorities in a combined authority or across sub-regional areas
- Interest from influential school and academy trust leaders in the potential of the new model
- Interest from other stakeholders/regional partners in exploring links to their work

Pilot 3 – Toward a new model of accountability: strengthening professional accountability, including school self-evaluation, teacher and school development, and reporting, within the overall framework of a locality partnership focused on improvement across the local area.

Summary of this pilot

We want to work with a small number of local areas to pilot approaches to developing an accountability system that is rigorous but less ‘high stakes’ than the current model. This should operate at the level of the individual teacher, the individual school and across networks of schools but should also be considered a key part of the national system. It should support professionalism in schools, teacher development and school improvement so that children are better supported in their learning. The pilots would develop a vision of what stronger professional accountability looks like in action.

The intention is to use the on-going learning from the pilots to consider how parts of the current accountability system could evolve to provide better support for, and validation of, a system of professional accountability. In developing work in this pilot, we would draw on learning from relevant international jurisdictions.

How would this pilot work?

In each local area involved, we would aim to work collaboratively with a small number of schools (from all phases) and academy trusts together with the local education partnership, if there is one, and the local authority. We want to explore how to pilot different approaches to school accountability. This would include developing processes such as self-evaluation, peer review, appraisal, and school report cards, as well as the use of a range of indicators that give a fuller picture of the school and its achievements than those in the current public accountability framework.

We want to understand how these approaches might support teachers and schools in an area to develop, provide excellent information for parents, and enable the local area to understand common needs and priorities. We want to test different approaches that will:

- Establish stronger systems of professional accountability operating within and across schools and academy trusts in the locality
- Encourage teachers to feel part of a learning community, at school level and locally, that acts as a source of professional aspiration and development
- Use a range of data, evidence and observation to support organisational improvement, particularly in relation to teaching and learning
- Capture the benefits and difficulties of within-school and across-school collaboration, in particular through peer learning, for developing the work of teachers and the learning of pupils
- Enable local partnerships, including local authorities and local education partnerships, to work collaboratively with schools to support their development
- Pilot approaches that might be credibly scaled up across a wider number of schools
- Test and cost the oversight and capacity needed to facilitate and co-ordinate the new model locally

What are some of the questions we want to explore through this pilot?

- How can teachers and schools, with support from their local partnership or local authority, manage their own quality control and continuing improvement better?
- How can we encourage an open and trusting analysis that includes dialogue about things not working well and use this to learn and develop professionally?
- How can pupils play a greater role in evaluating the quality of support for their learning and in helping to shape it too?
- How can schools become supported to become more enquiring and evidence-informed?
- How can professionalism be developed through peer review and peer learning?
- How could pilot approaches provide greater depth, breadth and frequency of information?
- How can we continue to provide clear information for parents and communities?
- How could local areas utilise the information to identify improvement priorities leading to a wider range of opportunities to support school improvement?
- How to pilot approaches with maintained schools and academies in trusts?
- How to quality assure the pilot approaches and the accuracy of reporting?
- How can we provide confidence that the approaches would be at least as rigorous as current models?
- How might the external accountability system give greater support to schools for professional accountability?
- Are there any structural, legislative or wider cultural barriers that create obstacles to achieving the pilot objectives? If so, what could central and/or local government do to remove those obstacles?

What conditions might be useful to have in place for a local area to work on this pilot?

- Enthusiasm and appetite to explore these issues and think innovatively to test options, with a willingness to spend time thinking creatively about opportunities
- Experience from some schools in the locality of having implemented interesting approaches to self-evaluation
- Collaborative engagement from a small number of schools and academies in the local area to pilot different approaches
- Collaborative engagement from the local education partnership, if one exists, and the local authority to support the work across the local area

RESPONSE FROM LOCAL AREA FOR LOCALITY PILOT PROJECT

Name of local area -

Lead contact point with e-mail address -

Which pilot are you applying for - 1, 2 or 3? (please complete separate responses for each pilot you are applying for)

Which key strategic partners do you envisage being involved in your work? Please list:

Q1 - Why does your local area want to work on this pilot? (up to 250 words)

Q2 - What features make your local area a good candidate for this pilot? (up to 250 words)

Q3 - Briefly describe your local context in terms of the pilot area (you might want to refer to the conditions mentioned for each pilot on previous pages) (up to 250 words)

Q4 - How might taking forward work in your local area on this pilot help to address some of the research questions we have identified? How might you look to build on the work of the pilot in your locality in the long term if it is successful? (up to 250 words)