

# Area Review Feedback

Report for SOF

Interim Report after one year

8<sup>th</sup> September 2010

# Area Review Feedback

## Interim Report after one year

- 1 **General Overview:** The government's **Primary Capital Programme (PCP)** requires local authorities to take a long-term strategic approach to capital investment and challenge them to be more ambitious in considering new models of leadership, organisation and rationalisation in order to maximise quality provision. It provides the opportunity for transformational change in Primary Education: the capital investment is only the catalyst for this change.

The Area Reviews, using the **Strategy for Change**, provide a robust strategic framework for capital investment, supporting national priorities and local need. The area review process takes into account the views and aspirations of local stakeholders and partner providers, offering to provide choice and diversity. Discussions within the Local Learning Community enable participants to put forward bold, innovative and radical options.

Options put forward during the process must address progress towards the objectives of the national **Children's Plan** (Devon CYPP), **Every Child Matters:** including extended services, children's centres, SEN provision, disability, sport, healthy schools and deprivation and **Choice and Diversity:** including expanding popular and successful schools and increasing the number of self-governing schools and Academies.

It is the intention of the **Stepping Stones** project that children and young people with additional needs should be able to access services and provision within their Local Learning Communities wherever possible. The area reviews provide the opportunity to discuss how this might be achieved.

Following the Devon Education Forum (DEF) formula funding consultation paper, LLC's have expressed greater interest in engaging in a more collaborative culture, in particular those that are: facing either falling rolls, within areas of rural deprivation or urban expansion.

- 1.1 The main emphasis of the Area Review Day is to sow seeds and begin discussions about the pattern of schooling and associated services learning communities want, in order to meet the needs of all the children, young people and families in their locality, as evidenced by data set priorities. The Area Review Day is the beginning of this process, rather than an event in itself or the end of the process when final decisions are made.
- 1.2 It has been very important to engage the LLCs before the Area Review Day so that initial conversations about the future of education within the LLC, and individual school contribution to that future delivery, can take place before the day. Now that the process is better known and embedded, learning communities are proactively approaching Area Reviews in a very positive manner.

## 2 Timescales

- 2.1 The Review process was originally a 4-year programme 2009-2013. However, we are now planning to complete all 31 initial Area Review Days by the end of July 2011.
- 2.2 Between September 2009 and June 2010, the following 14 LLCs have participated in their Area Review Days:

- Okehampton
- Exeter Central
- Exeter Beacon
- Exeter West Exe
- Torrington
- South Molton
- Barnstaple
- Bideford
- Axe Valley
- Dartmouth
- Chulmleigh
- Ilfracombe and
- Tiverton
- Newton Abbot

These include the 2009-10 cohort and the former BSF LLCs.

The 2010/11 cohort is scheduled for between July and November 2010. They have all had their briefing meetings and are preparing for the day:

- Teignmouth
- Holsworthy
- Crediton
- Totnes and
- Kingsbridge

The 2011/12 cohort is scheduled to take place during January, February and March 2011:

- Clyst Vale
- Culm Valley
- Ivybridge
- Braunton and
- South Dartmoor

The 2012/13 cohort is scheduled for March, April, May, June and July 2011:

- Exmouth
- Honiton
- Ottery
- Sidmouth
- Dawlish
- Teign Valley and
- Tavistock

2.3 All information and materials used at the Area Review Day are now available on the website:

[www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/schools/schools-services/cypstrategicplanning/cypsp-pcpreview.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/schools/schools-services/cypstrategicplanning/cypsp-pcpreview.htm)

so that LLCs can use this as part of their preparation. A leaflet summarising the Area Review process is also being produced for schools and governors, which will

be distributed at the briefing meetings in September (see details of briefings later in report).

### **3 Engagement**

3.1 The level of engagement from schools has been very good, with all schools being represented at:

- Okehampton
- Torrington
- South Molton
- Axe Valley
- Dartmouth
- Chulmleigh
- Ilfracombe and
- Tiverton Area Reviews.
- Newton Abbot

Exeter LLCs did not have representation from:

- Stoke Hill Infants School because their Ofsted Inspection was taking place at the same time
- St Michael's C of E Primary School
- Countess Wear Primary School
- Chestnut Avenue Nursery School
- Southbrook School
- West Exe Technology College and
- Redhills Community Primary School.

In Barnstaple, Landkey Primary School was not represented, whilst in Bideford, St Helen's C of E Primary School did not attend.

3.2 The engagement of other stakeholders, including County Councillors, has been good and has enabled some really wide ranging discussions to take place. Many County Councillors representing wards within the LLCs have attended Area Review Days. The number of County Councillors attending at least one of the fourteen Area Review Days stands at 24. School Improvement Officers have attended all but three reviews (Barnstaple, Bideford and Dartmouth) and colleagues from local Children's Centres, Locality Children's Trusts, Extended Services, Integrated Services, Early Years, the Diocese of Exeter, the Diocese of Plymouth and the Devon Association of Governors have attended most Area Review Days. DAPH have facilitated at all but two Review days and remain supportive of the review process.

3.3 When arranging the Area Review Day with the Chair of the LLC, there has been greater LLC input regarding the invitation of additional colleagues, notably at Newton Abbot and Teignmouth.

### **4 Evaluations received from Participants**

4.1 A short evaluation form has been given to schools as part of their afternoon tasks since the Torrington Area Review in December 2009.

The results below show that on a score of 1-5 (1 being the highest) the following percentages have emerged:

<b>EVALUATION</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Did you receive enough information to help you explore options?	16%	52%	26%	6%	0%
Was the Area Review well structured and well run?	17%	60%	22%	1%	0%
Did you feel that you were fully engaged as a stakeholder?	30%	49%	20%	1%	0%
What did you think of the venue?	8%	36%	27%	22%	7%

Most of the venue 4s and 5s were at Axe Valley, where the building was very cold and the heating was not working! The others were mainly at the Torrington, South Molton and Bideford venues. We now consult with the Chair of the LLC regarding venues, which has in most cases provided a suitable local location. We have addressed additional comments received in subsequent reviews.

## **5 Impact of Reviews so far**

5.1 One of the main outcomes has been that many more governors have become aware of, and often familiar with, the LLC datasets and are therefore more informed about the context in which 'their' school is working. Another main achievement has been the increased awareness of the number of different options (school organisation) that are available to schools and other partners within the LLC. Following the publication of "A Devon Landscape for Learning" document, LLCs as a whole, clusters of schools and/or individual schools have discussed:

- What could we do to transform learning for all the children and families in the area?
- What is the best way to deliver this?
- Why would the LA want to invest in these ideas?

LLCs have been able to take time to explore issues from their perspectives and share their points of view with other members of the community.

5.2 As a result of each Area Review many possible scenarios are recorded that the LLCs wish to explore further. These normally include all or some of the following possibilities:

<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Data and Standards</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Collaboration, sometimes as a starting point moving towards more formal arrangements</li> <li>– Management Partnerships giving governors more time to consider alternative methods of leadership rather than immediately appointing a Headteacher and/or creating time to prepare for federation</li> <li>– Amalgamating LLCs to increase capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Schools becoming service providers for and with each other</li> <li>– The use of learning community data to collectively raise standards</li> </ul>
<b>Catchments</b>	<b>Provision</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Changes to PANs</li> <li>– Changes to Designated Areas to reflect parental preference and travel routes</li> <li>– Re-build or new building proposals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Specialisms and capacity to develop local provision: curriculum, co-location, stepping stones, extra curricular activities, extended services, business and administration functions, governance, leadership, facilities and resources</li> <li>– Possible arrangements to increase accountability across a number of schools/LLC</li> <li>– Collaboration in order to increase the quality of extended services on the ground rather than signposting</li> <li>– Federation</li> <li>– Opportunities for co-located or integrated provision</li> <li>– Changes of age range, eg pre-schools and primaries, infant and junior becoming primary schools in the longer term, all-through schools where new provision is required</li> <li>– Refurbishment of existing buildings</li> <li>– In the two most recent Area Reviews, the impact of schools becoming academies has obviously been discussed at length</li> </ul>

5.3 The Area Review process is unique to Devon. Colleagues from Poole and Cornwall Local Authorities have attended an Area Review Day to observe our process. There has been interest nationally in what Devon is doing. It is worth noting what the Chair of Governors from Budehaven Community School recorded:

*“In thanking Devon for the opportunity to be an observer on these discussions, I hope that Cornwall Council will – once the time is right – follow the same route with primary schools, for many of whom the same problems, not the least of rural deprivation, are just as acute as those in Devon. These notes are of only marginal relevance to Devon’s discussions – but I very much hope that we may be invited to further developments of this exciting initiative and vision, which seems determined to break down the element of parochialism, which often restricts imagination and growth”.*

- 5.4 Whilst the change of government has created additional challenges and, in some cases, uncertainty, for instance over finance and access to academy status, and government policy is still taking shape, the Area Review Days will continue to provide a valuable opportunity for schools and their partners to discuss how educational provision in Devon may look in the future. This, together with the Devon Education Forum consultation on delivering excellent and sustainable education in a time of financial constraints, has encouraged headteachers and governors to start to think differently about how they might work in partnership to offer the best quality provision across an area.

## **6 Future Developments and Building Capacity**

- 6.1 **Preparation Activities:** There are a number of capacity issues for both LA and Diocesan Officers attending individual LLC briefing meetings, planning meetings, the Area Review Days and the follow-up that schools and LLCs need afterwards. In order to help manage this, two days in September, 21 and 24 September 2010, have been arranged as briefing meetings for all the LLCs scheduled for Area Reviews during 2011. Invitations to these September events were given to LLC Chairs on 15 June 2010.

- 6.2 **Follow up Activities:** On 11 June 2010 officers and our area review DAPH representative held an initial training day with the group of LA Associate Consultants (AC) (current headteachers who are paid by the Authority to facilitate and support LLCs in developing leadership) to enable them to start in supporting LLCs in Area Review follow-up activities. This system will mean that they develop relationships with particular LLCs/schools and become familiar with all the different possible follow-up topics rather than specific areas eg federation.

At this meeting it was tabled that each AC would 'sign up' for up to three LLCs with whom they would be called upon to work with. A number of the ACs are in LLCs that have not yet been involved in an Area Review Day and so they will be attending either Newton Abbot in July or Teignmouth in September. On 30 June 2010, Julie, Wilson Forster and Jayne Kyle attended a Barnstaple LLC meeting to start to look at how this system might be organised for the next academic year. Although only 10 out of 20 schools were in attendance, those present agreed that the use of Associate Consultants working with the Chairs of the LLC was a good idea and that they could be used to facilitate the difficult conversations that need to take place.

- 6.3 The review team are also proposing to organise an Area Review awareness training day for SIPs, advisers, SIOs and officers not involved in the days. This proposal will be centred around running the area review morning activities with the above, and advise of the emerging and possible scenarios, as well as looking at a set of notes, summary and planning documents so that all are aware of what information is available on the website before AC's go into schools of LLC's. This exercise is aimed for the Autumn Term.

## **7 Issues to be addressed**

### **7.1 Datasets**

When schools become academies or free schools, will their data be available for the datasets? What are the implications of this?

### **7.2 Additional Information**

Subject to cabinet approval, the recommendations and outcomes of the DEF consultation paper, the LA will need to provide information at the Area Reviews outlining the specific implications for LLC's.

### 7.3 ***Tracking Progress***

Although the Area Review co-ordinator and Chairs of LLCs are in regular email contact, Chairs are not providing regular updates on progress regarding the scenarios recorded at the Area Review Day. We have asked that it is a core agenda item at LLC meetings and a number of LLCs have follow up meetings arranged for later this term. One issue raised at the Chairs meeting in June was that often activity is taking place, but schools do not want this recorded 'publicly' until they have involved governors, staff etc and made firm decisions.

## **8 Area Review Notes and Summary Notes**

8.1 Following each Review the notes are returned to the Chair of the LLC for checking and then distributed via the Chair to all schools. Copies are posted on the Devon website for Officers to access via a username and password. Members are provided with both the notes from the review as well as the summary document direct.

8.2 As the review process has progressed there are a number of cases where schools who attended the day claim they have not received the review the notes, similarly in a number of cases others service providers have not received copies of the notes (in some of the early reviews the LLC have elected not to share the notes with attendees outside the schools within the LLC). This is a cause for concern and SPG colleagues are trying to address this by either providing the information to those concerned or asking LLC's to reconsider their stance on distribution.

8.3 Latterly during the summing up of the review day officers have sought consent from attendees to distribute the notes to all present.

## **9 Next Step**

9.1 Consider setting up a recording mechanism for Officers, so that whenever they are involved in, or are informed about meetings and/or actions following on from discussions at the Area Review, they can add them to an online document that can then be used to both inform and track progress.

9.2 Challenges include LA, LLC and individuals schools capacity to move towards improvement. Securing the capital investment required either from central government, or in cases of urban expansion via Section 106 applications.