

CHAPTER 8: MAKING IT HAPPEN - DELIVERING THE ENTITLEMENT

Context

- 8.1 The Entitlement Framework outlines our vision for new post-primary arrangements in which:
- pupils are central;
 - there is access for all to a wide, balanced and flexible mix of educational provision;
 - schools are of varying types but are seen as of equal value; and
 - schools operate in collaboration with their neighbouring schools and FE institutions and other providers, for the benefit of their own pupils and of all pupils in the locality.
- 8.2 Realising this vision will be a substantial undertaking. It will require both engagement and commitment at local level and strong leadership and co-ordination at area and strategic level, together with the necessary human and financial resources. It is the responsibility of the Department to provide the necessary strategic leadership for the planning and implementation of the major programme of development and improvement required. All the parties concerned should be involved from the outset, as equal partners, in helping to determine how services should be provided. This is especially important if multi-sector solutions are to develop.
- 8.3 Our advice about delivering the Entitlement Framework for all pupils envisages that school managing authorities, at local level, will develop arrangements which meet local needs. Mindful that there are already well-established structures to manage the education system, the Group agreed the following key principles:
- schools should remain at the centre of a system to develop new arrangements at local level;
 - schools should not be burdened with bureaucratic structures and procedures for the development of proposals;

- implementation processes should be based on partnerships between the existing managing authorities; and
- existing school management responsibilities should remain unchanged.

8.4 Planning school provision in Northern Ireland is complex, given the range of school types and managing authorities. The current planning process is well defined and implemented but does not facilitate a strategic co-ordinated approach involving all the managing authorities. The number of surplus school places and the continuing impact of demography clearly point to the need for a much more strategic approach. The Group considers that future planning for local areas should be done in the context of the 'common good' where schools should work together to ensure that all pupils in the area have their needs met. It is important that all schools in the area should take part, to ensure a coherent approach and secure the best use of the expertise and facilities available.

Implementation Process

8.5 The Group placed great emphasis on the development of proposals locally, with schools working together to deliver the best provision for all pupils in an area in the context of the Entitlement Framework. However, local development also has to be supported at both an area and strategic level, to ensure consistency and coherence in provision so that young people, regardless of where they live, will have access to the same range and quality of education.

8.6 We do not envisage additional layers of bureaucracy. Structures already exist in the form of the Department at a strategic level, and the Education and Library Boards at area level and these should be utilised as a vehicle to provide support for the development of local proposals. We recommend that work at a strategic level should be the responsibility of the Department with advice from a Strategic Planning and Implementation Group. At operational level, detailed planning will involve the schools and managing authorities working together at local level through Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs), supported and guided by Area Planning and Development Partnerships (APDPs) based on Education and Library Board areas.

Implementation Model



Operational Level

8.7 At operational level the development of proposals locally will involve:

- schools and managing authorities working together to determine the best provision to meet the needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations of all pupils in their area;
- discussions between schools, managing authorities, the FE sector and other providers; and
- engagement with parents, pupils, and the business and wider community to determine local needs and wishes.

Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs)

- 8.8 The LPDPs will include representatives of all schools and FE institutions in the defined local area together with representatives of the school managing authorities, and will be responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of new arrangements for the local area. The members of LPDPs will work together to develop proposals for future arrangements in consultation with parents and the wider public in the area. They will also implement, monitor and evaluate new arrangements at local level.
- 8.9 The LPDPs will be supported by the APDPs to enable schools to participate fully in determining the future arrangements for the local area, with the necessary professional and administrative support to enable work to progress.

Area Planning and Development Partnerships (APDPs)

- 8.10 APDPs will support the work of the LPDPs and evaluate proposals for new arrangements. The 5 Education and Library Boards are responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient schools in their areas and providing support arrangements for all schools in their areas. Given these responsibilities, we believe that the APDPs should be convened through, and serviced by, the Education and Library Board for their respective area. The membership of each APDP should include representatives from those bodies that will promote and manage change within the education sector. The organisations from which the members of the Post-Primary Review Working Group were drawn provide an indication of the groups that should be included.
- 8.11 The role of the APDPs is to:
- co-ordinate planning and provision of services within and across the Education and Library Board area;
 - determine what is a “local area”, and establish LPDPs;
 - provide the LPDPs with guidance, support and expertise in developing proposals;
 - consider and evaluate the proposals emerging from the LPDPs;

- ensure that proposals are developed in a coherent way, and that any new arrangements are consistent with the Entitlement Framework;
- ensure cooperation between LPDPs;
- provide support for the implementation of proposals for new arrangements through the LPDPs; and
- monitor the development of proposals and evaluate the implementation of proposals against the Entitlement Framework and criteria.

8.12 The “local areas” should be determined by the APDPs following consideration of information on local schools – primary, post-primary and special - alongside demographic information and geographical factors and in consultation with school principals. It will be important to avoid a proliferation of LPDPs to keep the process manageable and also to ensure a sufficient critical mass in each area. In some cases, a local area may cross an Education and Library Board area boundary.

8.13 Each Education and Library Board will have staff dedicated to facilitate and support the Planning and Development Partnerships at area level. They should be employed by the relevant Education and Library Board but under the direction of, and responsible to, the APDP.

Strategic Level

8.14 At strategic level, strong leadership and clear direction is needed to ensure coherence and consistency of provision and access to the Entitlement Framework across all schools in all areas. The Department of Education has overall responsibility for the implementation of new arrangements and it must show clear leadership and commitment to making change happen.

8.15 The Department will need to draw upon the advice and experience of those responsible for delivering change through the establishment of a Strategic Planning and Implementation Group. Its membership should comprise representatives of the key bodies who will promote and manage change within their particular spheres of responsibility. The organisations from which the members of the Post-Primary Review Working Group were drawn provides an indication of the groups that should be included.

8.16 At strategic level, we believe the Department should:

- secure the establishment of new arrangements for post-primary education through the implementation of the Entitlement Framework;
- secure the development and implementation of proposals by providing advice and guidance to those working at area and local level on matters of common interest;
- coordinate and monitor the implementation process;
- review all policies which impact, or have the potential to impact, on the overall arrangements for post-primary education;
- consider local proposals submitted for approval; and
- secure necessary resources to implement changes.

Implementation Process Timetable

8.17 We have proposed that the last Transfer Tests should take place in the 2008/09 school year i.e. for pupils transferring to post-primary schools in September 2009. Schools that decide they no longer wish to admit pupils on the basis of academic selection in advance of that date should be encouraged to do so. In the period up to 2008/09 the focus should be on establishing the conditions for these changes to take place. Schools should be working towards implementing the Entitlement Framework and developing proposals for new arrangements working through LPDPs and supported by APDPs.

8.18 The process of developing new arrangements will involve schools and managing authorities:

- auditing their existing provision against the Entitlement Framework; and
- through the LPDPs, developing proposals for new arrangements to secure access to the full entitlement for all pupils in the locality, including arrangements for cooperation and collaboration with other schools, FE institutions and other providers.

8.19 The development of local arrangements to meet local needs, wishes and circumstances will also take account of the views of parents and the wider community, including employers and Higher Education, through a process of local consultation. Appendix 7 sets out a timeframe for the various stages of this process of establishing the local groups and the development of proposals.

Key Recommendations

- Implementation arrangements should be based on partnership and should not require the development of additional administrative structures.
- Schools and managing authorities working together in Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs) should develop proposals for new arrangements in their locality.
- Area Planning and Development Partnerships (APDPs) will support the work of the LPDPs and evaluate proposals for new arrangements.
- The Department of Education should provide the strategic leadership in managing the implementation of new arrangements advised by a Strategic Planning and Implementation Group.