

Neighbourhood Renewal Thematic Strategy – Learning Theme
Statements for 2006 – 08

Context for 06-08 developments

Birmingham is recognised as a successfully improving city, with levels of performance which are better than other core cities and with many rates of improvement that are above the national averages. Improvement rates have been greatest in the wards with the lowest levels of attainment, which are typically those which are most deprived.

Good progress is being made at KS3 in English and Maths and at KS4 level. The number of schools remaining below floor target level is steadily reducing (by 2005 there were no secondary schools remaining below the 2006 floor target level) and significant improvements are being delivered for various BME populations. Because of the low baseline Birmingham still has significant distances to travel before achieving all of the national floor targets. The school performance of African Caribbean heritage boys and white boys in disadvantaged areas remains a particular issue. The city has made outstanding progress in reducing levels of adult basic skills needs.

The city has excellent school and pupil level data and planning information. This covers floor targets but goes well beyond these. Most of the individual achievement data is disaggregated by locality, by indicators of deprivation (e.g. 'free school meals') and by gender/ethnicity. This puts us in a position of knowing quite precisely where interventions and support need to be targeted if gaps are to be closed and floor targets met.

There are exceptionally good working relationships between the 'learning infrastructure' agencies. There are strong joint planning arrangements around children and young people, 14-19 developments and adult learning. The local area development and planning mechanisms for adult and community learning have been described as 'a national exemplar'.

The city is able to draw on a menu of interventions that bring about change in learning outcomes. In order for floor targets to be exceeded, overall public service agreement targets to be met and internal aspirations to be achieved, there are key points of leverage that are emerging from national research and local experience in what is regarded as a progressive, learning city.

These include focused work on:

good quality learning opportunities 0-5 and the ability to get a sure start in terms of learning (including the development of Children's Centres in disadvantaged areas)

engagement of parents and family learning programmes to counter intergenerational transmission of weak attitudes to learning (including implementation of a Family Learning Strategy)

structured menus of support that can be intelligently drawn upon by schools in the context of their own settings (including the city implementation of national strategies focusing on underperforming schools)

choice of routes to success and access to significance, at secondary school /

14-19 level (including implementation of 'Youth Matters' developments)
out-of-school 'booster' support for particular groups to increase their resilience to risks that might interfere with learning success (including work with groups of young people as part of Library Services planning and Arts/Cultural strategies)
creation of localised 'cluster' access to appropriate support services (including the 'extending' of school/neighbourhood support services)
packages of targeted support for schools focusing on whole school improvements in the key curriculum subjects
support for the professional development of teachers in order for them to work more effectively with particular groups
high aspirations, with learning viewed as a 'solution' not as a 'problem' (including multi-agency collaboration to develop alternative routes at KS4 for young people and targeted 'Level 2' booster work through networks of schools)
young people's engagement with others in ways that give them socially productive routes to significance (including work via learning mentors and personal advisers to keep young people in the learning loop)
wide and varied choice for adults to continue learning, with an emphasis on being successful/achieving etc (including the development of local area planning of local offers re adult and community learning)
wide-ranging opportunities to address basic social and employability skills for young people and adults (including a robust local implementation of the Skills for Life strategy)
higher rates of 16+ skills attainment at Level 2 and Level 3
residents engaging with surroundings, being members of groups, having a broad interest in life and events – all being stimuli for learning (including a focus on District level developments and engagement activity).

This overall framework is used to guide advice to Districts on the local use of neighbourhood renewal funding, against local understandings of which elements need focusing on most. The same framework – with the extra emphasis on floor targets and other key outcomes – also guides decisions concerning use of the 'thematic' neighbourhood renewal funding alongside other available budgets.

Decisions about activity to support are made by the Education and Regeneration Group via key managers representing the CSP bodies with a responsibility for the effectiveness of the formal leaning structures across the city. The group will look to support activities that will:

Provide ways of accelerating, or giving extra 'bite' to, the agreed wider strategies. This avoids issues of duplication, deadweight and displacement. Provide clearer support for what works in which context, in a situation where universal strategies have taken the city a long way in raising levels of performance but where the 2004-2008 period will increasingly need customised interventions to match the varieties of providers and communities.

Extend support to new target groups or develop new ways of working within the mainstream.

The model is a 'joint commissioning of change' that has been highlighted as good practice. The group members thus have roles that include ensuring additionality to other developments, ensuring that activity pushes agreed approaches faster/deeper/wider than would normally happen and focuses on localities and groups of people who have furthest to travel to meet attainment levels needed in society today.

Targeting activity 2006-2008

Performance data is now able to be analysed, annually, at SOA level to identify priority neighbourhoods where the gaps are greatest at Foundation/ Key Stage 2/Key Stage 3/Key Stage 4 etc.

The same performance data, disaggregated by ethnicity, is able to highlight any shifts in targeting priority groups which have lowest levels of achievement.

Targets at city and neighbourhood levels that are related to floor targets include foundation assessments and attainment KS2-KS4. These are reported annually. Work is underway to establish specific, measurable numerical targets for the priority areas/communities.

Across the period 2006-2008 progress against specific targets will be as follows*:

	<u>Actual</u> <u>05-06</u>	<u>06-07</u>	<u>07-08</u>
% of pupils achieving 5 A*-C (or equivalent) GCSE	56.7%	57%	60%
% of pupils achieving 5 A*-G (or equivalent) GCSE (including English/Maths)	86%	89.5%	91.0%
Number of primary schools below KS2 floor target English	69	65	60
Number of primary schools below KS2 floor target Maths	91	80	75
Number of secondary schools below KS3 floor target	23	15	5

Number of secondary schools below KS4 for 2008	4	3	2
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(* these form Local Area Agreement targets where appropriate)

Analysis of district-level activity has illustrated the difficulty of ensuring a clear and direct focus on floor target-related activity.

Support to District-level decision-making includes ongoing access to achievement data on a ward basis, related to the performance of schools and pupils resident in wards; access to information on local learning networks involving primary and secondary schools, adult and FE providers; provision of a menu of relatively straightforward options for use of neighbourhood renewal and other funding support to make short term impacts on learning.

Early drafts of districts' plans will be analysed to identify the learning elements of these, with feedback on the extent to which district-supported developments are likely to lead to permanent changes in the learning outcomes for the locality. Support will be made available on the plausibility of proposed District interventions.

Priorities for 2006-08 (with indications of 'weight' being given to each strand)

- accelerating the 14-19 collaborative 'flexible learning pathways and individualisation of learning' agenda in target wards, creating access to mosaics of vocational and academic curriculum element (45% of support)
- school achievement pre-14 – 'unlocking achievement' in target wards – tackling the residual number of schools below floor target through additional intervention and support; and assisting some more 'average' schools to take a step up in achievement rates (15% of support)
- addressing the learning-related features of underachievement in target locations (20%)
- extending the range and focus of different models of family and community learning (aligned with LSC/Engage programme) in order to use intergenerational learning to increase the resilience and attitude to learning of family members (5% of support)
- establishing small-scale research and collaboration across themes (5%)
- offering clearer guidance to districts and other regeneration programmes (5%)
- the remaining support will be to ensure that the above activities take place effectively and are linked to other programmes of support (5%)

The first three of these priorities are anticipated to form no less than 80% of

NRF support. All of these activities are developmental ones to bring about changed ways of working within mainstream activity. None will establish posts or projects that need continuing funding beyond 2008.

Ref:AB/desktop/NR thematic strategy (statements for 06-08).doc