



partnerships for schools
building schools for the future

This case study looks at how Knowsley and seven national education organisations* have been developing ways of working together to increase local capacity for transformation and system-wide reform through the BSF programme.

It will also set out lessons learned that can inform future ways of working and developments for other local authorities, national organisations and other partners.

Key project information

Local authority: Knowsley

National partners* : Becta, Innovation Unit, National College of School Leadership, National Strategies, Partnerships for Schools, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, Training and Development Agency

No. of students: 8,100 places

No. of schools: Seven Centres for Learning (four community and three faith secondary schools)

BSF Wave: 1

First School open: January 2009

Other partners: Microsoft, Centre for Educational Leadership (CEL)

Building an Innovation Zone with national partners through BSF: Knowsley's experience

Project description

An 'Innovation Zone' project (IZ) was set up in September 2007 by Partnerships for Schools (PfS) with two local authorities and seven national education organisations. The aim was to find ways for the national organisations to align their work to provide a continuum of support for change management, innovation and transformation of practice, learning and achievement through the local authority's BSF programme.

This case study sets out developments to date in Knowsley, one of the Innovation Zone project local authorities. It is not intended that this project should be replicable across every local authority, but that it will offer approaches and promote opportunities for other local authorities and national organisations to consider how they can work together through BSF to strengthen local capacity to lead change and transform outcomes for children, young people, staff, families and communities.

Setting up the Innovation Zone project

The project began with Knowsley identifying their expectations of an 'Innovation Zone' project. This informed a meeting between the partner national organisations and the two local authorities, which led to the development of a formal proposal for the Innovation Zone project that was approved by each organisation taking part.

The framework for the Innovation Zone project had been driven by 10 key objectives that were identified by all partners:

1. Collective dialogue and shared analysis leading to informed action by the Strategic Action Team (SAT)
2. New learning together for local authorities, schools and national organisations, sharing risks

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3. Build capacity for innovation in and across local authorities and schools; informing local and national policies and practice
4. Preparation and succession for pedagogic leaders to accelerate a shift in practice
5. Applied development of the Big Picture curriculum
6. Modelling use of new technologies to improve leadership, organisation, learning, activities, environments and services
7. Provide timely support to enable a climate for innovation and transformation
8. Students, staff and community lead and share transformation
9. Relevant, flexible learning, assessment and measures of progress and achievement.
10. Collective and shared evaluation of outcomes free up the system, but keep it accountable

Each of the local authorities began its project with a round table meeting of representatives from key partner organisations to agree local aims and terms of reference for the group.

Progress and impact are recorded against the 10 objectives by each of the two Innovation Zone project groups, with opportunities for joint reflection and planning at the regular Innovation Zone co-ordination group meetings. In March 2009, Knowsley and members of its SAT contributed to a review of the Innovation Zone project, to identify its impact and lessons learned to date. These are captured in this case study.

Developing the IZ Project in Knowsley

In Knowsley, the round table group was established as a Strategic Action Team (SAT), chaired by Partnerships for Schools, with a representative from each of the seven national organisations, plus two other partner organisations who are working with the local authority – Centre for Educational Leadership and Microsoft.

The purpose of the Knowsley SAT is “to work together to identify and deliver solutions that support innovation and transformation through the ‘Future Schooling in Knowsley Programme’.” The group has regular meetings where colleagues work together focusing on building local capacity to implement Knowsley’s transformational vision to create a “Borough wide Innovation Zone around 21st century learning environments and system reform”.

This vision is underpinned by clear local policies for pedagogical reform, leadership development, governance transformation and the introduction of new learning environments.

What has worked well

Three major contributions that have been made by all the IZ partners through their involvement with the Knowsley journey, are:

1. the support given in communicating Knowsley’s progress to enhance wider understanding and gain support for the local authority’s strategy for transformation with other partners;
2. the collective role and contribution they make at the SAT meetings;
3. the direct contributions they make through their local representatives, which has brought both immediate support and a commitment to future contributions to meet the local authority’s ongoing requirements, when needed.

An additional outcome has been the sharing of ideas across the agencies themselves where, through planning together on the SAT, they have identified areas for joint ventures.

The biggest benefit has been the regular SAT meetings of local representatives from the national organisations with the local authority. Together, colleagues have gained a deep understanding of the work that Knowsley is progressing and have acted as critical friends to inform the strategic planning taking place. This has also enabled national organisations to gain a better understanding of each other’s involvement with the local authority and to contribute collectively to the planning for additional support, as and when required.

All partner organisations agree that a key strength that has driven the Knowsley Innovation Zone has been the local authority’s clarity of vision and frameworks for leadership and pedagogy.

Several of the strategic partners have been working alongside colleagues in the borough and have been able to inform others of their continuing involvement through SAT meetings. Work is also being implemented by the local authority’s teaching and learning consultants with additional support procured from the Merseyside Creative Partnership.

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Examples of key activities from partner organisations that are contributing in ways that are timely and are increasing local capacity to take forward Knowsley's transformation agenda include:

Becta	work with Knowsley's City Learning Centres
CEL	bespoke second and third tier leadership programme
IU	a Leadership Development programme with all Principals and support for field trials to produce a 'fit for purpose' system governance model
Microsoft	Innovative Schools Programme and training of seven teachers as Innovative Teachers and two consultants as Peer Coach trainers
NCSL	support to develop School Business Managers, including a local learning collaborative network; alignment of the Leading from the Middle programme and facilitating governor training on succession planning
NS	consultancy and opportunities to match schools in similar circumstances
PfS	chairing the Knowsley SAT, advocacy and support, national co-ordination of the IZ project and challenge to focus on evaluation of impact from the project
TDA	bespoke training on the School Improvement Planning Framework for Headteachers, training for workforce development officers, advice on workforce issues and support and challenge against workforce modernisation deliverables with BSF
QCA	provision of a consultant to work with the first Centre for Learning student cohort to support the development of a common language for learning and to explore their perceptions of 21st century learning and begin to prepare them for learning transition

Further development by the SAT

The local authority is taking a strategic lead through its Transformation Strategy, with agencies providing support, advocacy, advice and responding to specific, identified needs. The programme is managed by the local authority as an integral part of its Future Schooling Programme with monthly highlight reports produced for the Future Schooling Core group. The SAT meetings update the group on activities and progress and identify opportunities for partner agencies to contribute to the ongoing work and review within the borough. The local authority is now at the stage where it can provide a further brief to enable the SAT to engage in co-developing more detailed action planning.

Examples include the local authority's work with the Principals of Knowsley's new Centre for Learning. This has reached the point where their requirements have been identified and specific support requested, particularly around workforce reform, so that a coherent strategy can be developed by the SAT. This will include consideration of opportunities for further alignment and joint provision of support across agencies. The SAT has also agreed that it will monitor activities already in place, plan for additional support, when required and identify joint success criteria by which to measure the impact of activities.

Having sufficient local capacity to support both immediate and longer term school improvement imperatives is an issue for Knowsley.

The next stage is to identify how to enable support for the Knowsley Challenge and the Future Schooling

in Knowsley education transformation programme in ways that can increase capacity for delivery, develop a clear transition between immediate and long term strategies and secure long term sustainable gains in outcomes.

Outcomes and impact in Knowsley

Knowsley is developing audit tools to inform activities and provide benchmarks against which impact can be measured.

A powerful example is the local authority's audit tool to support developments against its pedagogic framework. Knowsley's pedagogical framework reflects national strategy requirements and the expectations of the QCA Big Picture curriculum, with a focus on the development of Personal Learning and Thinking Skills across the curriculum. All schools are now signed up to the framework. This describes what quality teaching looks like, supported by the audit tool.

Early work with the Principals of the new Centres for Learning resulted in the identification of a common set of curriculum principles. The audit tool has been developed to reflect the Pedagogical Framework and to enable the identification of teacher training needs. This includes a focus on what high quality teaching looks like, accompanied by peer coaching and an online version of the tool to engage staff in all the new Centres for Learning.

This tool supports teachers to identify how their current practice matches the pedagogical framework in the following five key areas:

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1. Professional characteristics
2. Planning
3. Assessment
4. Learning experience
5. Climate for learning

A separate tool also addresses departmental and whole centre criteria. Each section contains statements that are cross referenced to the TDA professional standards for teachers.

The first Centre for Learning, Christ the King, opened in January 2009 and has been a priority for support and development. This has included using the local authority's pedagogic framework to provide guidance and support to Centre staff on 21st century learning in flexible and adaptable learning environments and dedicated work with students to engage and prepare them for new approaches to learning. The local authority is embedding the lessons learned from the opening of the first Learning Centre to inform the change management programme, activities to support the transition for the next Centre for Learning and future contributions needed from national organisations.

Next Steps for Knowsley's SAT

The strategic alliance with the national organisations is developing well in Knowsley. The next stage is further alignment across agencies and detailed action planning to meet identified needs for different work-streams and stakeholders and at different stages of the programme.

Key areas being considered by the SAT to support this next stage are:

- further alignment of work by agencies to maximize added value, with 'when ready' support, including contributions to working groups, as appropriate
- mapping a continuum of support to ensure all workforce groups and stakeholders are ready for new approaches in new environments, including links with Initial Teacher Training
- supporting the development of leadership and governance models that are relevant to local needs
- building opportunities for action research approaches and accreditation
- involving the local authority in national pilots and test beds

- bringing together all local and regional ICT partners to review and update the ICT vision in light of the anticipated impact of increased use of new technologies
- an external objective review of the impact of Centres for Learning to validate Knowsley's efforts and assess the impact of learning environments on those people using them.

Key areas of planning include

A **workforce development plan** and **stakeholder consultation**, linked to wider workforce and social partnership development, national standards and Knowsley's Pedagogic Framework, with:

- support for key workforce issues arising from planning new approaches to teaching and learning, as identified by the Principals;
- roll out of the CPD programme for all new centres, linked to the Pedagogical Framework;
- a CPD programme containing training for the Personalised Learning Environment Champions, to support the use of ICT to enhance learning;
- schools to work through the ICT self-review framework with the aim that all will achieve the ICT Mark.

Leadership development, with:

- roll out of the Leadership programme through the Centre for Educational Leadership
- development of collegial leadership by the Principals and local authority colleagues to develop the new Knowsley education 'system'
- the development of new governance arrangements to support the Knowsley education "system"
- a governor leadership and development programme focussing on transformation
- second and third tier development, to include a link into NCSL's national pilots clusters, working with all new middle managers in National Challenge schools.

Student Researchers, with:

- post occupancy work from September 2009 in Centres for Learning

Parents, carers and families, with:

- further development and research through the IU Next Practice and Learning Futures Projects
- Parent Support Advisers and use of the TDA's Extended Schools Pilot.

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Top Tips

LAs and national education partners have common goals so the more opportunities they find to plan together strategically the better. The SAT can provide a platform for this. Ideally the national organisations and the local authority should establish a SAT before they enter the programme and meet regularly with consistent personnel. National organisations can also consider how they can join up their programmes with the local authority to avoid duplication and target resources more effectively

School communities are transient over the period of a major change programme, half the school community may have left (both staff and students). The leadership team and succession planning of the school is critical to managing that change internally and with external agencies

Student involvement in change ought to be a prerequisite to involvement in BSF. Schools need to embed a genuine process of change that involves students as co-constructors of learning and student researchers. Student voice has to be more than representative and all students have to feel some sort of connection with the process for change. Electronic communications offer real opportunities to have representation from the student body

Young people in Knowsley have been engaged in reflecting on their learning experience and shaping the development of new approaches and environments for their learning. This has been resourced, with a budget provided to students for this purpose.

The aims of the curriculum need to be clarified and re-visited frequently - and with every stakeholder - before moving on to reflections about how the curriculum is taught. The process needs to focus on the curriculum as the entire planned learning experience rather than just the building and the actual pedagogical change has to take place before the move to the new building. Schools need to be able to identify a history of their own curriculum innovation and build on that with a clear evaluation of how they have owned the change. Some teachers, governors, students and their families do not see the need for change, especially those who think the current model of schooling is successful. Going back to consider 'why change', and to endorse the need for change in learning, including responding to changes in society, is vital.

Governors need significant support and development opportunities when implementing a radical approach to leadership with new models of schooling and learning centres. Contributions from national organisations to help develop local capacity to implement new models of leadership and new approaches to pedagogy needs to be linked to governor and governance development.

The concerns of staff and students have to be taken seriously. There must be constant opportunities to go back and pick up those who have been left behind, or are not convinced about the need for change.

The concerns of a community have to be taken seriously and concerns addressed. The process of change is often led by those who are convinced by it and they can leave the others behind.

Schools and communities need educational support in the process of pedagogical change. It is vital that the community, parents and students are involved in the process throughout the planning, building and commissioning phase and that their active involvement is planned in the new school community.

Everyone needs to be on message, ensuring the BSF programme focuses on pedagogy and not buildings. This needs to be carried through to the design output specification, supporting the school workforce to be ready to work in new environments, with classrooms becoming learning bases. The local authority has made use of test model environments and is providing a range of default classroom layout positions / orientations to promote expectations of new ways of working. This is challenging the workforce to more effectively utilise space for more flexible and dynamic approaches to learning.

It is critical to have a coherent change management plan for all groups of staff and stakeholders. Workforce development is a strand needing support throughout the programme, including developments to support the wider community dimension.

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Developing an IZ approach with BSF: considerations

The national organisations involved in the IZ Project are part of a wider group that meet regularly with PfS to plan further opportunities to provide a continuum of support for local authorities preparing for and taking part in BSF. The following suggestions and considerations are intended to inform and encourage further partnerships by local authorities with national organisations in ways that can accelerate transformation of practice and outcomes through BSF.

Some considerations when developing an Innovation Zone approach through BSF

Early preparation: *What needs to be in place before starting 'the joint conversation'?*

- Clear local authority expectations of the scope of transformation intended with BSF and a framework that incorporates national organisations' remit areas.
- Early work on the local authority's framework for leadership alongside discussions about school organisation, succession planning, new approaches to pedagogy, 21st century schools and distributive leadership across the locality and workforce innovation.
- National organisations consider how they can work jointly with the local authority, using existing resources with a BSF lens – advising, supporting, problem solving, learning, engaging them in pilots, advocacy, etc.
- The local authority has an early discussion with each national organisation when identifying its priorities for BSF, to provide opportunities for each key agency to engage in the process for the development of the local authority's Readiness to Deliver (RTD) submission.

Developing a joint approach: *When, what, how and who?*

- Following the RTD submission, set up a meeting between the local authority and key national organisations to share the local authority's vision for BSF and expectations for transformation so that all partners can consider how to build local capacity for change to 'get there quicker' – with support focussing on enabling a shift from gradual to accelerated change and a greater impact on outcomes
- National partners can then consider how they can align existing/planned programmes to create further opportunities to increase local capacity, support the development of the change management plan and

add collective value through the local authority's BSF programme.

- If a joint forum doesn't already exist this could be established with representatives from the local authority/schools and each key national organisation meeting regularly to maximise opportunities for joint planning, activities and evaluation of impact against expectations of transformation.

Considerations for the strategic group can include:

- what difference organisations can make, individually and collectively, and how
- linking strategies, planning, activities and impact across agencies through the BSF programme
- ways of working and problem solving collegially
- developing a shared vision and a deep understanding of the local authority's vision and strategy for change – its opportunities and challenges
- contributions to national developments and test beds
- opportunities for peer learning and engagement within and across local authorities
- ensuring the BSF programme focuses on pedagogy and not buildings

Activities can include:

- consideration of and support for different models of leadership and governance
- preparing the full workforce, students, parents/carers, the wider community and other partners for new approaches to pedagogy and curriculum development in 21st century schools
- working across primary, secondary and post-16 strategies to increase curriculum coherence
- finding ways to encourage pedagogic thinking, questioning and trialling to accelerate the learning journey so that they are ready for new approaches to learning
- supporting staff who are ready innovate and those who are resistant to change;
- promoting and supporting creative use of space and technology to support new approaches to pedagogy;
- aligning immediate and long term remits;
- providing opportunities for students to co-design / have a say in learning for the future;
- supporting with specific audit or impact tools.

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“The establishment of an Innovation Zone has given the local authority a national partnership forum with which it can test out its radical plans for the transformation of schooling in Knowsley. The partnership with agencies has enabled a shared understanding of the approach the local authority has taken and has brought challenge to support and maintain the direction of travel. The resulting endorsement of the Future Schooling in Knowsley strategy has been crucial in enabling the potentially divergent approaches of the national strategies and Building Schools for the Future to be drawn together into an integrated approach, so supporting school improvement and the raising of standards.”

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Further information

Future Schooling in Knowsley site:
www.knowsley.gov.uk/families/education-and-schools/future-schooling-in-knowsley.aspx

Further information on Knowsley's Future Schooling strategy and transformational learning strategy can be found on the Partnership for Schools website at: www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk/documents/Knowley_EdVision.pdf

Further information on the scope of possible partnerships and support and expectations of transformation with BSF can be found on the PFS website: www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk/library/education_transformation.jsp