

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education and Young People's Services

**To: Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee
13 January 2015**

Subject: Supporting the Well-Being and Effectiveness of Headteachers

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: County Wide

Summary: This report sets out the way the Local Authority (LA) works with Headteachers to support them in being effective in carrying out their responsibilities to lead good schools, and how the Local Authority discharges its duty of care for the wellbeing of Headteachers.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and endorse the actions being taken by the Local Authority to support Headteachers to be effective leaders of their schools.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the on-going development of the Local Authority's support for the effectiveness and well-being of Headteachers across Kent. The report makes no differentiation between types, phases or status of schools and reflects the ways the LA supports the wellbeing of Headteachers.

2.0 Current support for the effectiveness and well-being of Headteachers

2.1 The LA recognises that the role of Headteacher has significantly changed in recent years and become more challenging. This change of role reflects the changing national agenda including greater autonomy and accountability of schools, higher expectations for the education system and school performance, a raised bar for school inspections as well as decreasing budgets in real terms.

2.2 Most Headteachers have had a successful teaching career and have served an apprenticeship as a Deputy Head, Head of Department or Assistant Headteacher. Most Heads are driven by a strong moral purpose and commitment to make a difference, to ensure that children and young people have the best possible educational experience and achieve good outcomes. Headteachers recognise that leadership takes energy and resilience and the capacity to build resilience in others. Because they have a duty of care for staff and pupils, they recognise that they have a duty of care to themselves also, to manage their work life balance and to secure their own professional development, support networks and in many cases a personal mentor or coach. It is also the responsibility of Governing Bodies to ensure Headteachers are well supported professionally, from induction through to more established career development opportunities and support.

- 2.3 In its work with schools, and as part of its support and challenge functions, and as an employer, the Local Authority has a clear duty of care to Headteachers. There is an expectation that the Local Authority will provide advice, support and guidance, training and other professional development opportunities for Headteachers, as well as a range of other support functions and services for schools which enable Headteachers to carry out their roles effectively.
- 2.4 There are a number of support mechanisms in place for Headteachers in Kent. Some of these are formal arrangements and some are informal arrangements made by Heads themselves who recognise where and from whom they get the kind of professional support they need to do their jobs effectively.

3.0 Formal individual support for Headteachers

- 3.1 The following is a summary of the support for Headteachers that is available from the Local Authority:
- Induction for new Headteachers including the identification of a mentor
 - Coaching : available by arrangement with the LA
 - Access to the Support Line counselling service
 - Regular meetings with School Improvement Advisers and Area Education Officers
 - Timely support from the Educational Psychology Service in the event of a critical incident affecting the school. This would normally include providing support by working directly with the Headteacher and senior leadership team.
 - Immediate press support for any Head managing enquiries from the media
 - Support from AEOs when managing complaints including parental complaints
 - The provision of data to support school improvement
 - Regular district and area briefings and Headteacher meetings with senior officers
 - Regular communications and updates on local and national strategies and policies that inform the work of schools
- 3.2 Depending on packages they may have purchased with the LA, there is immediate support and advice for all Personnel and HR issues, Legal support, Finance and Buildings. For all Headteachers support is only ever a phone call away. There are strong relationships between schools and the key staff in LA services, and most services allocate named officers to liaise with schools in each local area.

4.0 Network support for Headteachers

- 4.1 There is a wide variety of Headteacher meetings which are organised by Headteachers themselves in localities to provide support and advice, to share practice and to develop local projects and peer networks.
- 4.2 The LA has actively brokered and facilitated school collaborations to ensure schools are supported through school to school support and the sharing of best practice. 80% of Kent schools are in established partnership and collaborative arrangements with other schools which provide strong support for improvement. This work is supported by the Kent Association of Headteachers.
- 4.3 There is a wide variety of leadership courses and other development opportunities, some of which are targeted to various groups of Heads to provide even greater support for their development.
- 4.4 There is also access to training schemes such as coaching and mentoring and leadership qualifications, and Ofsted Inspector training, to ensure that Heads are as well skilled and confident as possible in leading their schools.

5.0 Future Developments

- 5.1 As part of the on-going work we have recently taken the following actions:
- Ensured via the School Improvement Advisers that all Heads who would like a mentor have one in place.
 - Ensured via the School Improvement Advisers that all Heads who would like a coach have access to one.
 - Reviewed our advice to schools on accessing the Support Line counselling service
 - Ensured that all Chairs of Governors and Headteachers are aware of the Professional Development Time that all Heads are allowed in order to carry out their work effectively
- 5.2 The Local Authority is also developing a self assessment framework, using the Educational Psychology Service and School Improvement Service, to help Headteachers and the senior management in schools to identify when they may be under stress so that preventative steps can be taken.
- 5.3 The Chair of Governors is well placed to ensure that Headteachers are well supported both professionally and personally. Headteachers do not work alone, and while some Headteacher positions are more challenging and sometimes lonely, the senior management team has a responsibility to be supportive and collaborative so that there is a collective approach to the wellbeing of senior leaders.

- 5.4 The LA has also been developing opportunities for Executive Headship and system leadership, which many very able and experienced Headteachers are keen to take up. More than 40 Headteachers have now participated in this leadership programme. However, we recognise that Executive Headship places more demands on some individuals. Where Heads are taking responsibility for more than one school the Local Authority carries out a risk assessment to ensure there is capacity in the schools concerned to support the Executive Head and to secure the on-going development and management of the schools concerned.
- 5.5 Headship is a demanding and challenging role, which requires high levels of leadership skill and expertise as well as personal resilience. It can at times be stressful as much as it is rewarding. School leadership in Kent is strong. In 80% of schools leadership and management has been judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, and there is highly effective leadership in many other schools that require improvement. The LA, working with Chairs of Governors and Headteachers themselves, has put in place many supportive systems and structures as outlined in this report. However, we recognise that we can always do more and that we have to be vigilant to ensure individual Headteachers are not experiencing unacceptable levels of challenge which mean they can no longer be effective school leaders.

6. Recommendation

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and endorse the actions being taken by the Local Authority to support Headteachers to be effective leaders of their schools.

8. Background Documents

Staff care services: Managing staff issues - appended to the report

9. Contact details

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Managing staff issues

Staff Care Services

Support Line: face to face counselling

Download Support Line leaflet

In 1990 Support Line was set up to offer a professional and confidential counselling facility to staff of Kent County Council. The service has since developed and now Support Line Service offers counselling, coaching and mediation not only to Kent County Council staff but to other organisations in Kent.

One of the core principles underpinning the service is the belief that an appropriate intervention at the appropriate time helps the wellbeing of the employee. Support Line endeavours to assist individuals to meet both personal and professional challenges within the workplace thus enhancing work performance.

The Support Line team, based at Park House, East Malling, is the initial point of contact for callers. The phone line is staffed Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm.

Employees are offered a maximum of 7 sessions of counselling a year. The first session is an assessment which allows you and the counsellor to find out what help you require.

Each session is normally offered once a week but may be spread over a longer period where appropriate.

How can counselling help?

- Counselling can help by clarifying what the problem is and how it is affecting you
- Helping you to find out the most appropriate way of managing your problem
- Helping you to identify sources of stress and how to deal with them effectively
- Helping you cope with major life changes and traumatic events
- Looking at what is possible for you to achieve
- Encouraging you to identify other sources of support
- Encouraging you to build self-confidence and self-esteem.

Is the service confidential?

Yes, the service is confidential.

All counsellors abide by the British Association for Counselling Code of Ethics and Practice, which specifies a rigorous code on confidentiality.

Where will the counselling take place?

We aim to offer you a location that is near where you live or work. We have over 50 counselling venues throughout Kent and so you will usually not have to travel very far for your appointments.

How we maintain the quality of our service.

At the end of your first and last sessions, you will be handed an evaluation form by the counsellor along with a pre-paid envelope addressed to Support Line.

We statistically analyse how the service is being used, the perceived quality of the service and if people find their counselling helpful. The information you give is managed confidentially. It provides statistics only and individuals cannot be identified.

What if counselling is not what I need?

In looking for help and support, counselling may not be the most appropriate service to meet your needs. Support Line offers a broad range of services that may be more suited to your requirements.

If you would like to arrange counselling, please contact the team on 01732 526910 or complete the information sheet and e-mail confidentially to Support Line.