

**Our choice, our responsibility:
Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's
services**

Brian Lawson
Consilient Consulting Ltd.
Office 7
The Gateway
Sheffield
S2 5TF

1 SUMMARY

This article briefly summarises the design development, delivery and preliminary outcomes of an intensive and concentrated co-created programme delivered during October and November 2010. The intention of the programme was to respond pro-actively and creatively to the transformational relationships, implied by the Academies White Paper, for reforming Children and Young People's services in the City of Sheffield.

2 BACKGROUND

Following the successful dynamic and interactive co-creation in March 2009, with 150 Head teachers, of a shared vision and principles for the delivery of services to children, young people and families in the city the Director of Children's Services Dr Sonia Sharp wanted to build on this platform. Her vision was to bring representatives of the whole constituency of those involved in responsibility for delivering services to children, young people and families together to co-create a response to the risks and opportunities represented in the Academies Bill White Paper. An early analysis of the situation identified the following:

There were opportunities for the City:

- To design our own future and create a great legacy for the city
- To reaffirm and strengthen shared principles and moral purposes across the city
- To redesign the shape of services for children, young people and families
- To 'future proof' vital services and promote a collegiate approach to learning, community cohesion and child well being

This was in the wider context of:

- A move to localism and devolution
- The creation of 'state funded independent schools'

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

- The implementation of the Pupil Premium
- Budget reductions across the public sector
- A diversification of the market place

The risks to the city were seen to be:

- Fragmentation and lack of cohesion
- Increased competition at the cost of collaboration
- That the most vulnerable and at risk children could fall through the net
- That services for low incident need or out of school and/or community based provision would become unsustainable
- That there would be no safety net or social glue following the implementation of the changes.

Within this frame the potential role of the Local Authority as a key partner was identified as:

- The champion of localism - ensuring democratic leadership and accountability
- Promoting capacity and capability - securing a positive and thriving future for the city
- Acting as a champion and advocate for quality services for children, young people and families.
- Brokering strategically across a wide range of partnerships and issues
- Intervening where required

3 THE DESIGN PROCESS FOR THE PROGRAMME

Over the summer a number of discussions and dialogues took place with key stakeholders, partners and those with a wide range of specialist expertise, including Head teachers, City Council officers, other key partners in the city; the Department for Education and Deloitte.

This resulted in a proposal to run 3 key events over a month to try and accelerate the process and development of a response. At this point Steve Robinson was appointed as the Co-Director of the programme to ensure co-construction with schools as equal partners. Brian Lawson from Consilient Change a local Training and Development Company, who had co-designed and delivered the visioning workshop in March 2009 was also asked to lead the facilitation of the events and become part of the development and delivery team.

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

It was agreed that the focus of the programme would be to:

- Build on the previous work undertaken with head teachers and extend this to include a wider constituency
- Focus on building consensus and a mandate for creating future services
- To do this on a co-creational/co-constructive basis, dynamically and in real time.

The three elements of the programme were agreed as:

- An interactive, whole system day conference for 350 participants including Governors, Head teachers, officers from the City Council and representatives from other partner agencies. The purpose would be: to assess the current levels of the consensus and mandate for taking forward potential models; to explore likely future scenarios in the context of a number of services areas and archetypal case studies and to create a mandate and membership for the follow up intensive workshop. The workshop would undertake detailed work and then report back to the whole group to seek to agree a mandate for the way forward.
- A smaller intensive two day workshop running from 8 until 6 for a representative group from the initial conference and including young people and parents. These sessions would work on the mandates and issues identified by the conference and report proposals back to the follow up workshop for agreement.
- A further follow up half day workshop for the participants at the initial conference to report back on proposals and agree a mandate for the way forward.

The final design for the programme was agreed on the 22nd September 2010 with the initial conference planned for the 20th October. The intensive workshop was scheduled to take place on the 9th and 10th of November and the follow up workshop would run on the morning of the 19th November. We were advised that this was a demanding timescale to achieve something that a number of experts told us hasn't been done before, some of whom took the view that it couldn't be done.

4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

A planning group and a decision making group were confirmed from the local meetings that had been taking place in the design phase. Firstly a planning group chaired by Steve Robinson was formally agreed made up of a number of Head teacher representatives and senior officers who had already been meeting. To this were added representatives of the three teams who would support delivery of the programme: an administration team to handle the practicalities of booking venues and delegates onto the programme; a communications team who would lead on the design, preparation and delivery of the content; and a facilitation team who would lead the hosting of the events and the interactive done on the day components of the delivery programme. The administration team and the communications team were drawn from the Children and Young People's service of the City Council and the hosting of the events and interactive done on the day delivery was undertaken by Consilient Change. This

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

group met every Wednesday morning from 8am to 11am from the 22nd September to the end of November.

A core group was also established from a previous group to review the development of the programme and confirm final delivery decisions in relation to content process and focus. This group met less frequently than the core group and was chaired by Sonia Sharp Director of Children's Services with the Co-Director Steve Robinson, the communications lead, the key senior officers and Brian Lawson from Consilient Change as members. Deloitte provided arms length advice and support to the development of the programme.

5 DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME: THE INITIAL CONFERENCE ON THE 20TH OCTOBER

By coincidence the first event in the programme was delivered on the day of the Comprehensive Spending Review. In our development meetings we had agreed a 'thrift and quality' approach to the event so that we kept costs down to a minimum whilst keeping the capacity for a high level of interactivity. We also decided to keep an integrated city feel to the branding of the event. We used the indoor running track at Don Valley Stadium to host the event and provided packed lunches in brown bags to keep costs down and maximise the time at lunch for interaction. Our branding was designed as a skyscape of the recognisable icons of the city landscape. We decided that the focus of the day should be on three possible future scenarios which were developed by Steve Robinson with support from Deloitte: 'do it yourself ' 'with a little help from your friends' and 'working together' scenarios.

We divided the day into four discrete parts:

- An introduction by the Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services Colin Ross, followed by an audience discussion and identification of the needs of the group which led to keynote presentations by Sonia Sharp and Steve Robinson and into a further audience discussion of the questions this raised. This was delivered theatre style.
- Following a break we organised facilitated discussions in mixed groups at 38 separate tables. We divided the tables to cover one of the three future scenarios. Each group assessed the implications in their scenario for the original vision and principles and future service provision. This was done in an adjacent space in the venue.
- A further discussion after lunch, at the same tables and within the same scenarios' looked at three archetypal case studies for in each of the scenarios. The groups focused on seeking shared agreement as to the purpose and focus of the intervention whilst also looking for more effective and innovative ways of meeting needs together.
- A final session in self selecting peer groups to indentified what the participants would do between the 20th October and the 19th November and what they would like the participants on the 9th and 10th November to focus on in more detail. This was followed by a PowerPoint presentation by the two Directors of the work that had been

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

completed during the day and concluded with a debate and a question and answer session with the co-Directors and the Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services.

As the day progressed a number of real time displays were created for participants to view. These included:

- The needs participants identified at the beginning of the day
- The questions that participants had at the start of the day
- How they saw the vision and principles and the likely patterns of service delivery in each of the three scenarios
- How they would respond to and be more effective and innovative within each of the scenarios in relation to the three different case studies.

The final PowerPoint enabled us to identify:

- What people had needed from the day and whether this had been met
- A redrafted vision based on the discussion in the morning
- An initial illustration of how service delivery might look different in each scenario
- A gathering together and prioritising of the principles which were important to participants, including a view about what we should always do and what we should never do.
- Some critical questions and a mandate to proceed with the intensive workshop.

The event was attended by 337 participants and this meant that 75% of the Children's Centres; 73% of the Primary Schools; 91% of the Secondary Schools and 100% of the Special Schools were represented. A representative sample of participants from the City Council across the service areas also attended.

The table top facilitators gave a very positive evaluation overall of the quality and depth of the discussions, although one or two had a more challenging time. See the picture (1) overleaf to get a flavour of the conference and the chart to get an overview of facilitator feedback (2). The Programme Directors and the Lead Member were delighted by the attendance, engagement, depth of dialogue and the reactions and response to the first event. Some quotes from the facilitators summed this up:

“Good start & great debate and energy”

“Full of ideas and boosted by the positive contribution”

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services



Figure 1

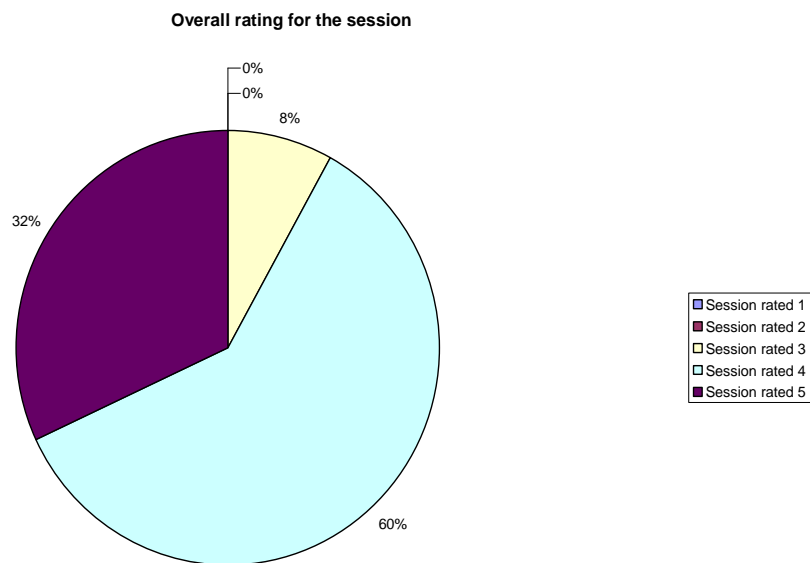


Figure 2: 20th October Facilitator Evaluation

6 DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME: 9TH AND 10TH OCTOBER 2010

The planning group which met on the 25th October considered a number of overview reports and mind maps on which to base the planning decisions for the 9th & 10th November; these included:

- A breakdown of attendance at the 20th October

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

- Analysis of evaluations from 20th October
- An overview report of what participants wanted done on the 9th & 10th November
- An overview report about what participants were going to do prior to the 19th November

We also planned and organised the attendance of Young People (via the Young Ambassadors and Youth Council Projects) and Parents (via the Parents Assembly and the Additional Needs Consultation) into the programme. It was clear from the feedback that the 20th October participants wanted us to concentrate on the concept of a city wide body and how it might be constructed as well as how service provision might be integrated into a locality model.

The two days on the 9th and 10th November were run from 8am to 6pm in the main hall at Chaucer School and the event was hosted and supported by staff and students from the school. A representative group of 60 (Head teachers, City Council Officers, Governors, young people and parents) attended the two days. The programme for the first day included:

- Summary presentations reviewing the 20th October and subsequent progress, along with some identity building and initial review of the material.
- Work in 8 tables to identify the issues which needed to be addressed in relation to:
 - Young people challenge
 - Parent's challenge
 - Service Structures
 - Citywide body structures
- The groups presented their initial findings and then continued to work on the issues until the end of the day when each group gave their final summaries.

It was clear as we progressed further and deeper into the dialogues and conversations that we were grappling with what Keith Grint calls 'wicked problems' - problems with no easy or quick solutions, which would require, as Heifetz puts it, adaptive rather than technical leadership solutions. Participants were given 'done on the day' summaries to take home with them and reflect on overnight. Photo 3 gives you a flavour of the working environment.

The second day began with a large semi-circle facing the display boards with the content from the previous day organised into a narrative structure. It was clear from the opening round of dialogue that the participants had found the task harder and more complex than they had first imagined. We re-organised and re-formulated the working groups for the first part of the morning and we had six groups focusing on:

- The structure of the City Wide Body

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

- Integrating services into a local structure
- Delivering services to the most complex and vulnerable families
- Focusing on early intervention and early years
- Engaging parents as part of a parents charter
- Addressing young people's issues



Figure 3



Figure 4

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people’s services

By Lunchtime, the groups were fully focused and integrated as picture 4 shows. Each group gave a more focused feedback and then we broke into groups to decide how to prepare the feedback for the 19th November and how to continue the process of service development. By the end of the day we had drafts of:

- A PowerPoint summary of the process of the two days and its outcomes with agreement as to who would present it
- A four page handout of key outcomes, including a redrafting of the vision and principles, an integrated model for the city and a view of the possible structure and priorities for a city wide body.

Although significant progress based on in depth engagement had been achieved, there was both recognition of this and reservations about it in the evaluations (see figures 5 & 6) and two quotes illustrate this:

“Really enjoyed the two days - excellent leadership and partnership”

“I had expected more concrete outcomes...worried that colleagues on the 19th will feel that we haven’t been working”

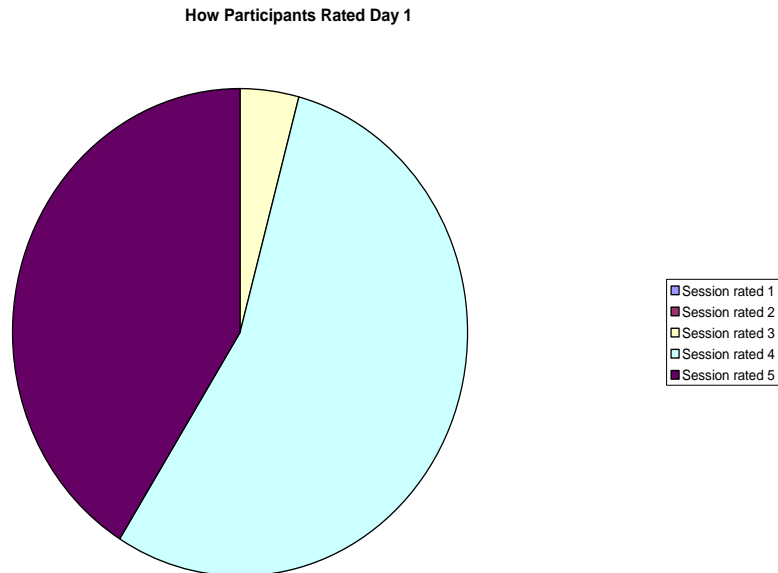


Figure 5: Participant Evaluations from 9th November 2010

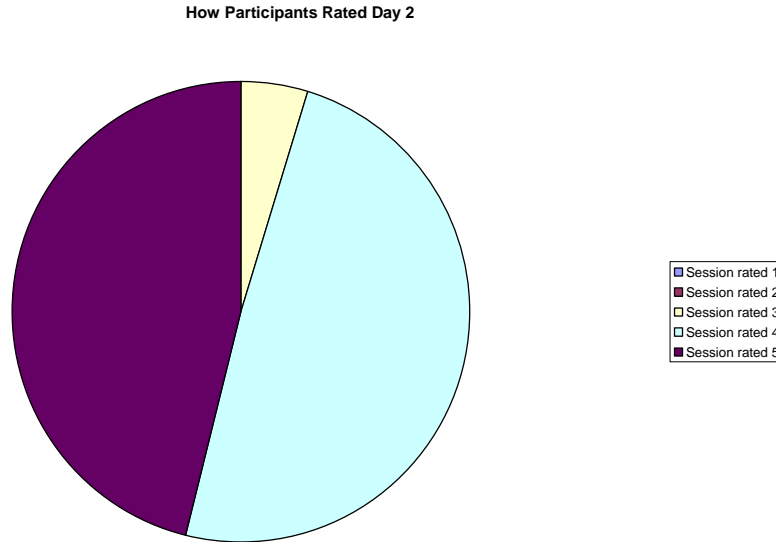


Figure 6: Participant Evaluations from 10th November 2010

7 DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME: THE FINAL WORKSHOP ON THE MORNING OF THE 19TH NOVEMBER

We only had time for one planning group between the intensive workshop and the final half day on the 19th November. At this session we agreed the PowerPoint presentation, the summary handout, the feedback we wanted and the evaluation required. It was agreed that as the target audience for the feedback was primarily Head Teachers and Governors that the feedback should be lead by Head Teachers from the planning group along with another Headteacher who had also volunteered. The table top facilitators would be drawn from the participants that attended the 9th and 10th as they would be able to provide detail of their experience to participants who hadn't been there. The tables were loosely organised into families of schools with a mix of City Council Officers.

180 participants came to the half day which had the following structure:

A presentation on the work of the 9th and 10th November was given by four Head Teachers followed by a table top discussion of the four page handout. The groups then provided written feedback on the vision and principles, the integrated model (see figure 6) and the city wide body. This written feedback also requested a mandate to proceed to develop these ideas further.

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

Along with a broad mandate to progress with the development of the vision and principles, the integrated model and the city wide body, the first discussion groups identified a surprisingly large number of additional questions.

During the break we organised and sorted these into key themes and then began the second session after the break with a question and answer session with the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member. Our last table top discussion asked for local and individual responses to taking the work forward locally and also asked more formally for an individual mandate to proceed with the development work. The session concluded with a presentation of a timeline identifying key milestones in achieving a first reconfiguration of services for September 2011.

The figures in the tables below and overleaf (7-18) show the level of the mandate agreed.



Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

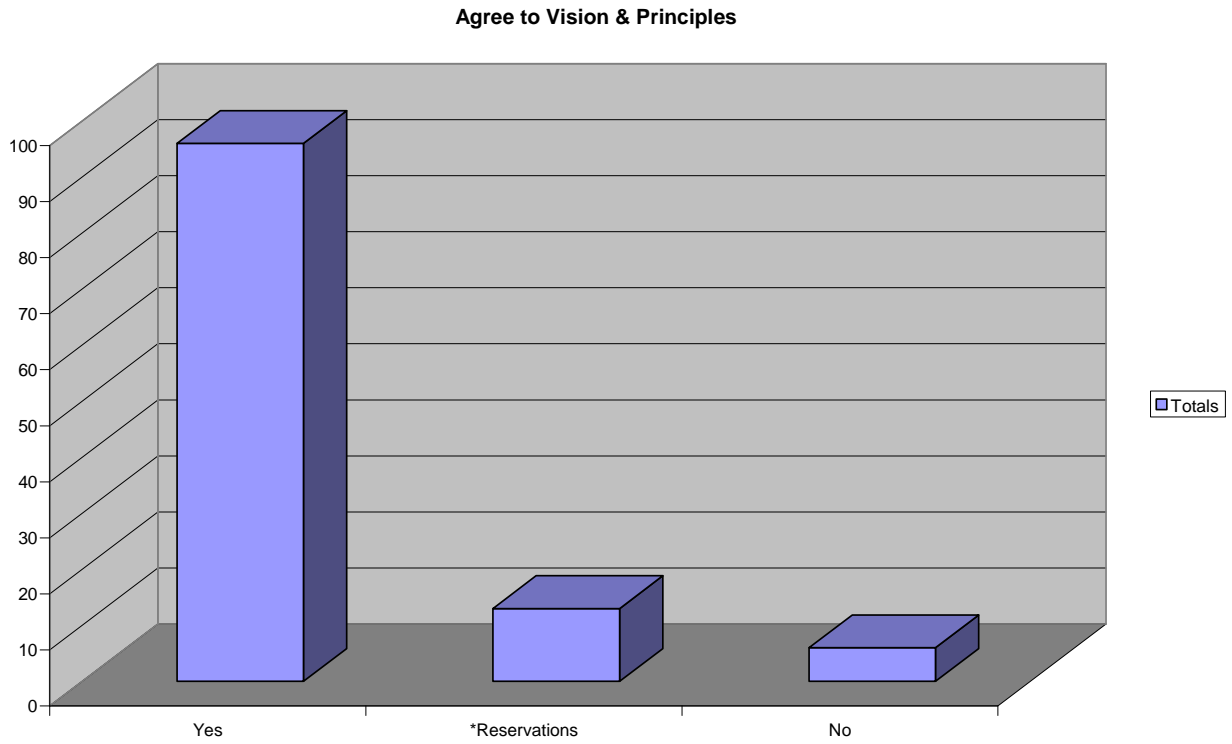


Figure 8

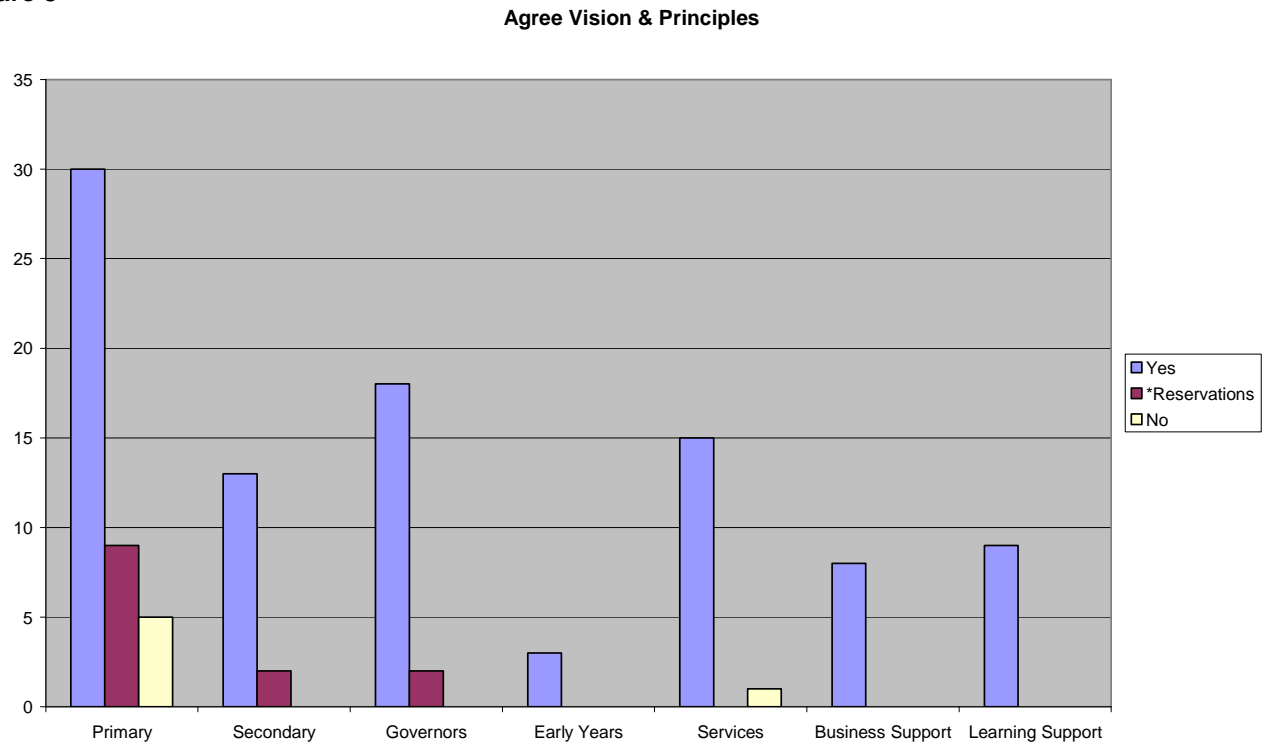


Figure 9

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

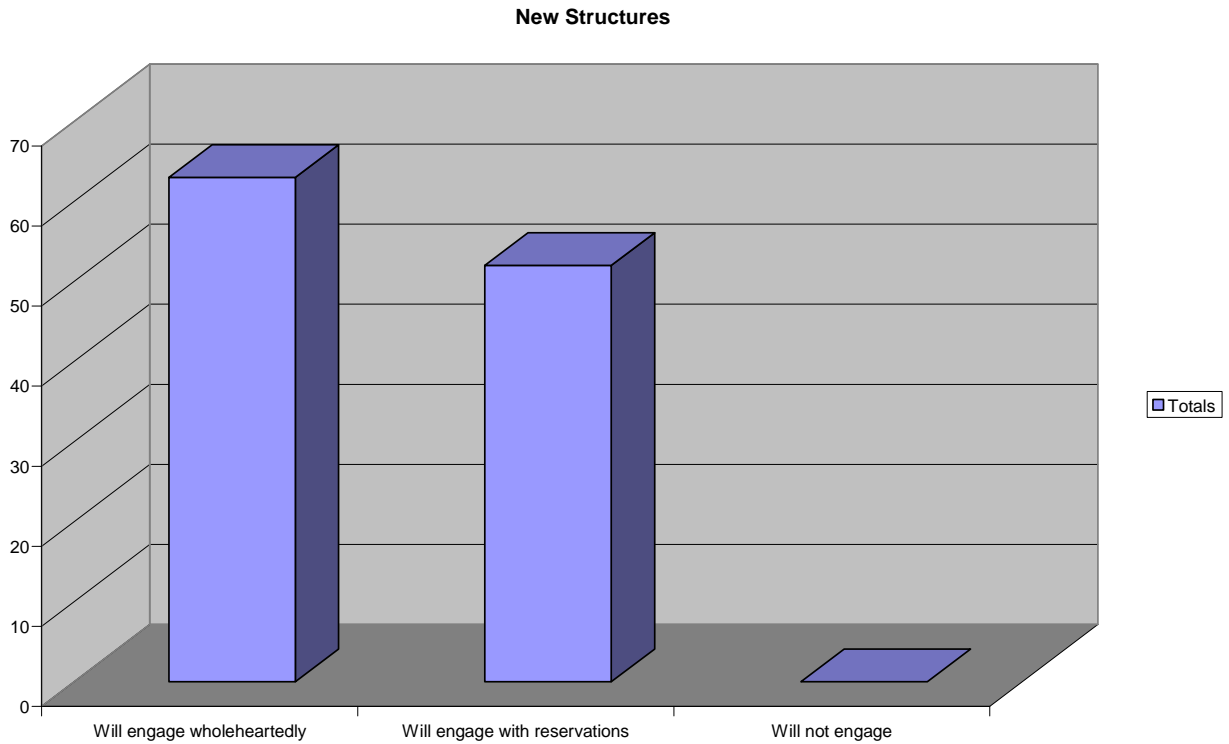


Figure 10

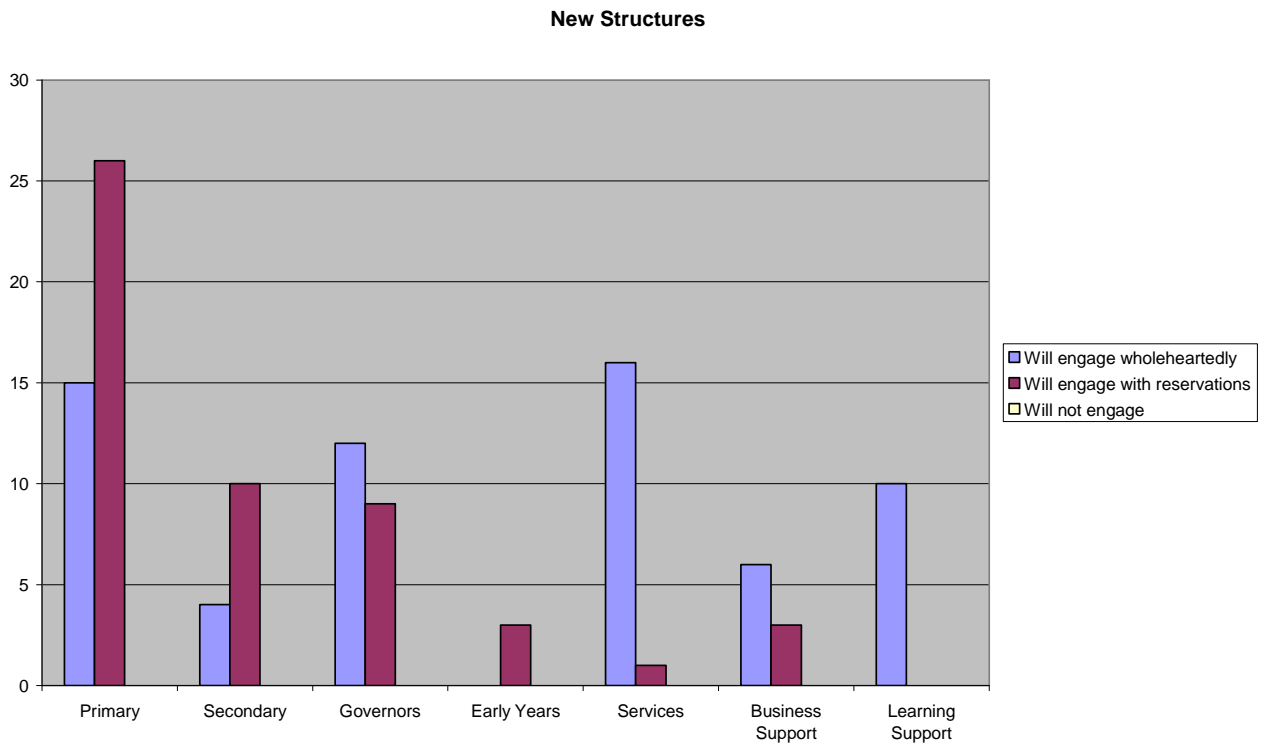


Figure 11

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

Set Up Citywide Body Soon

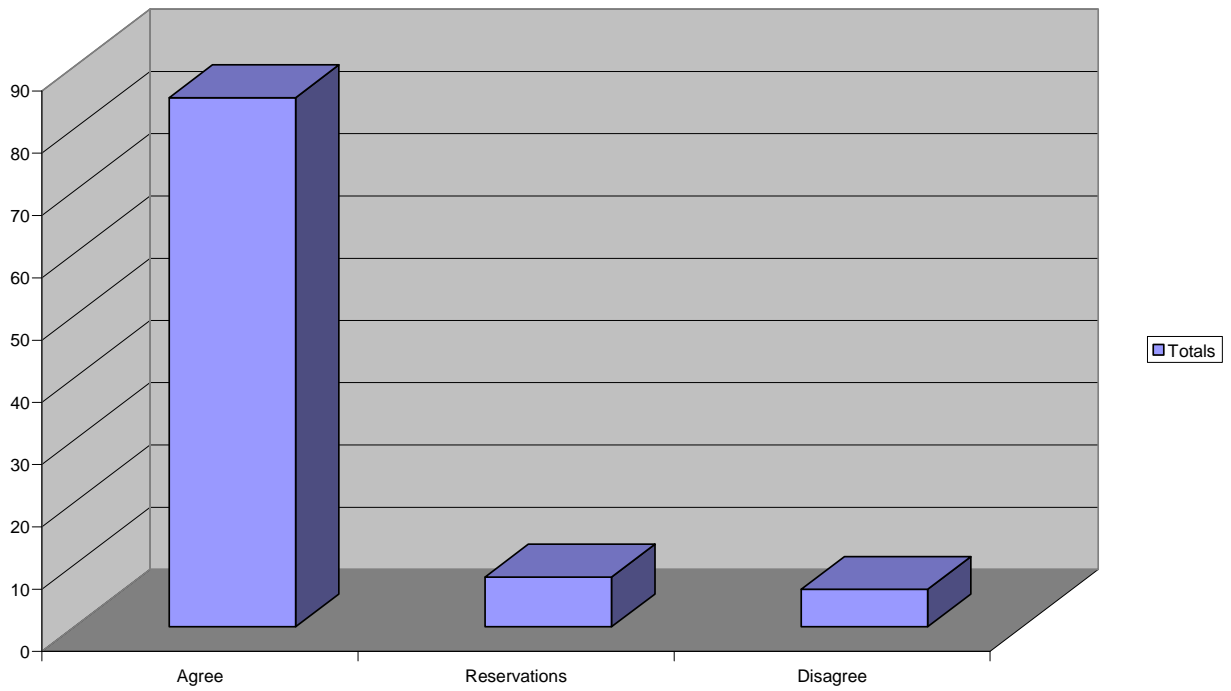


Figure 12

Set Up Citywide Body Soon

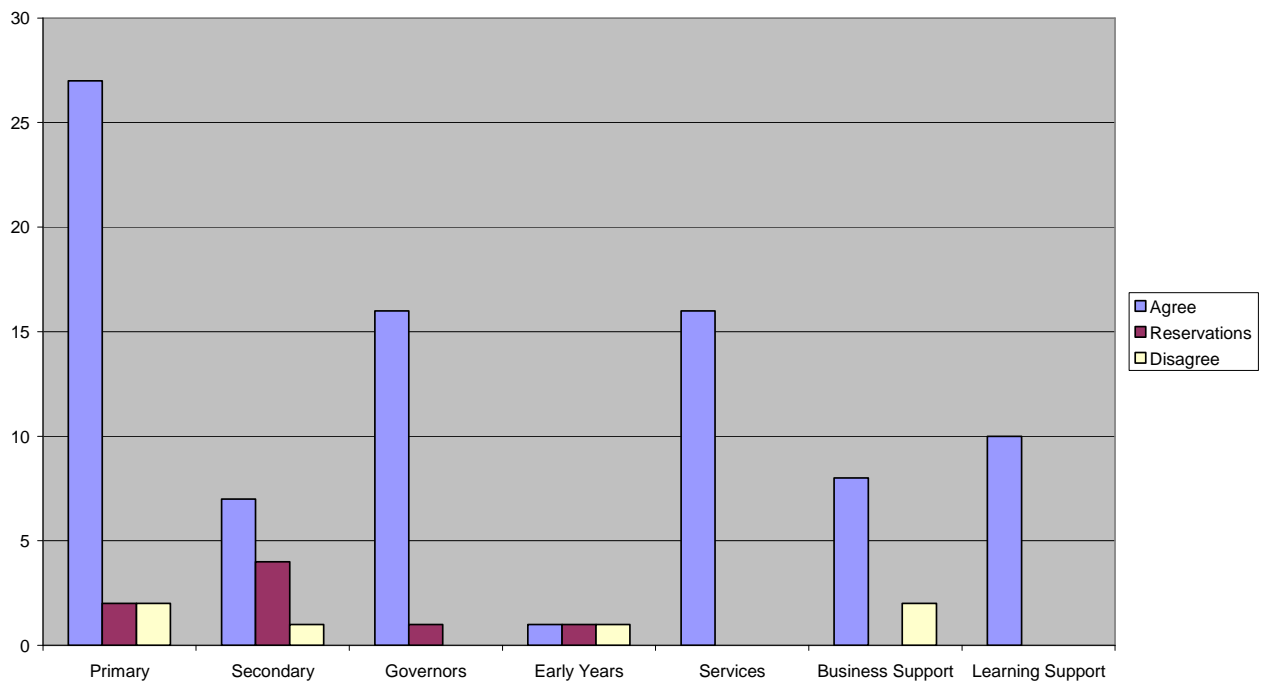


Figure 13

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

Future Workshops

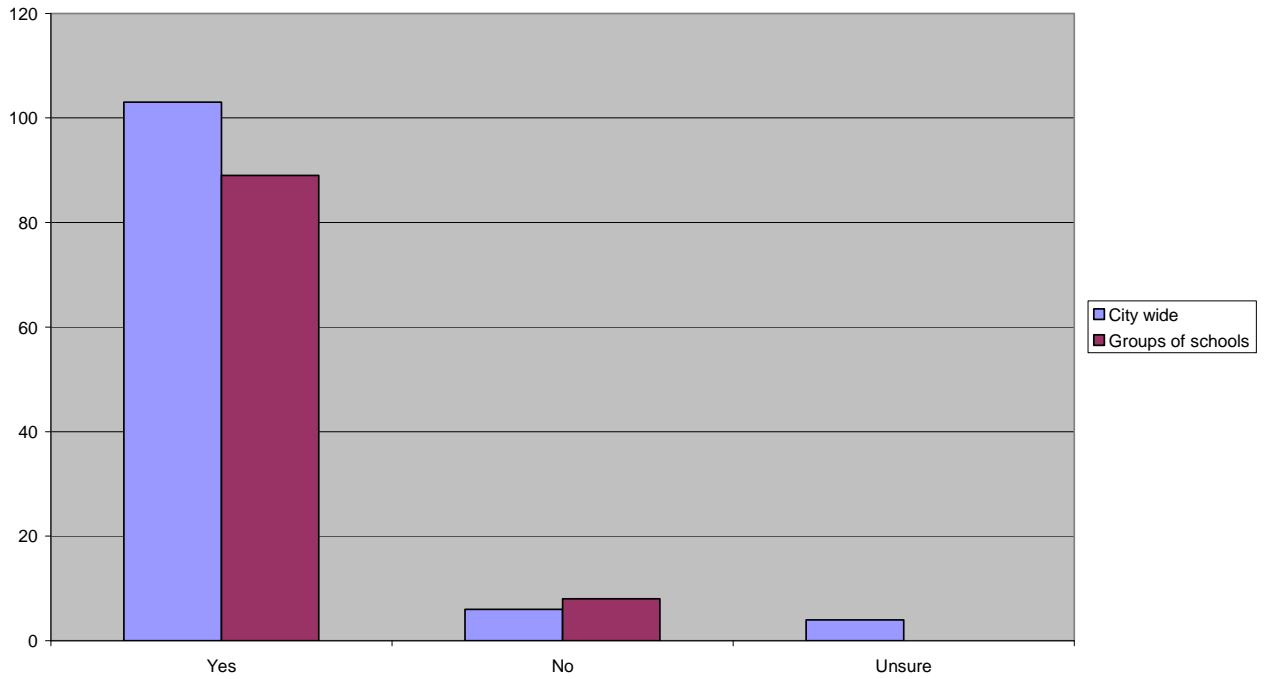


Figure 14

Future Workshops By Group

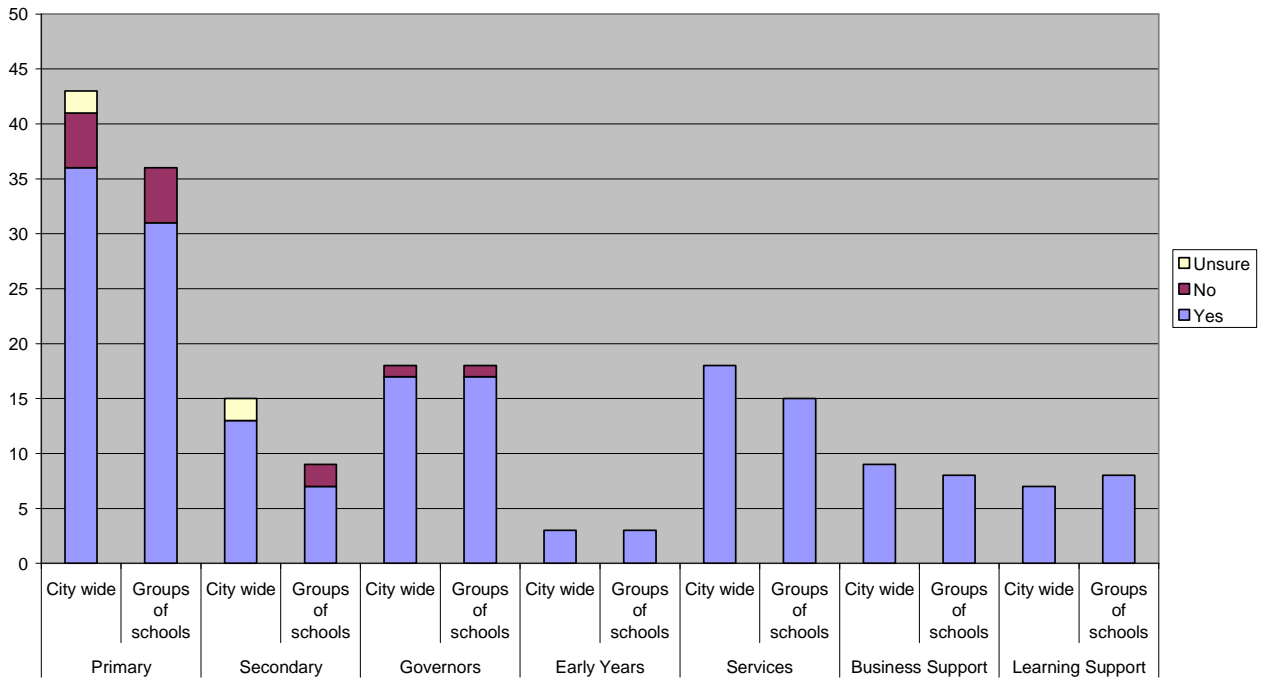


Figure 15

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

Themed Workshops to Take Part In

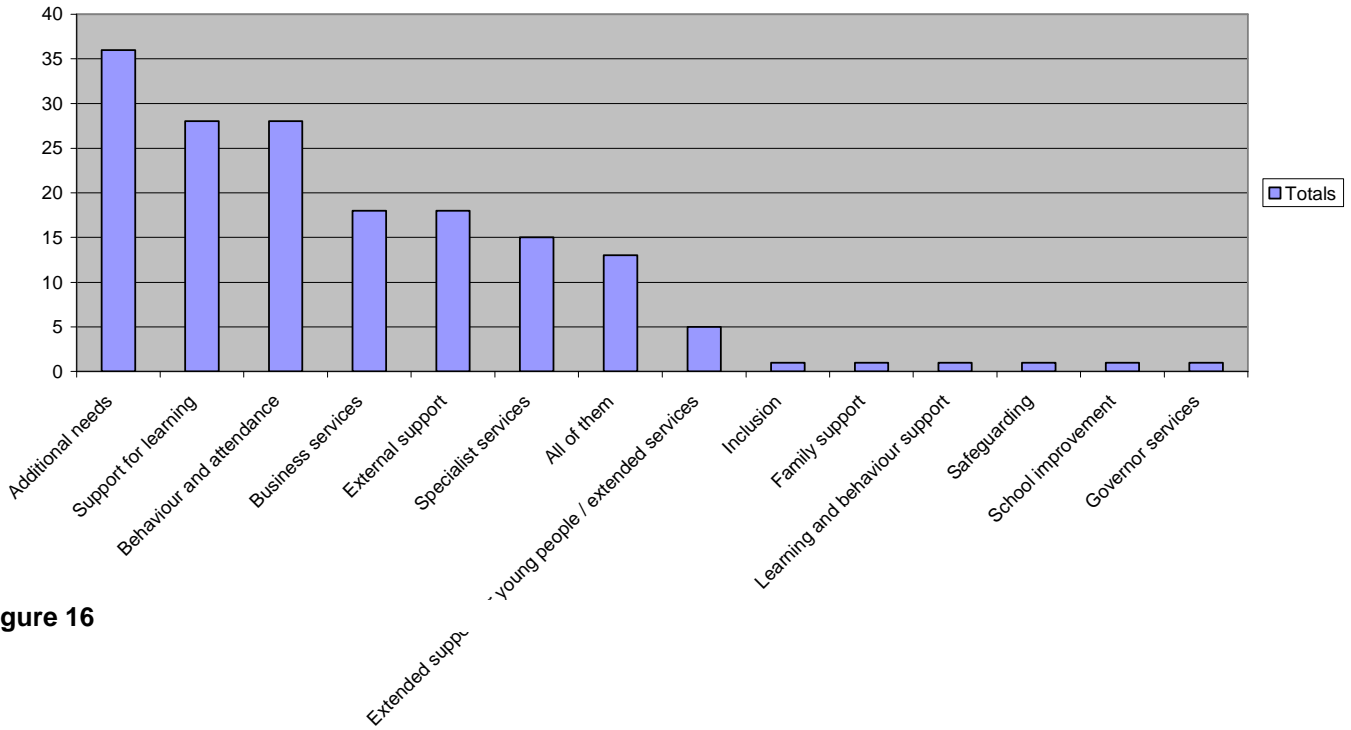


Figure 16

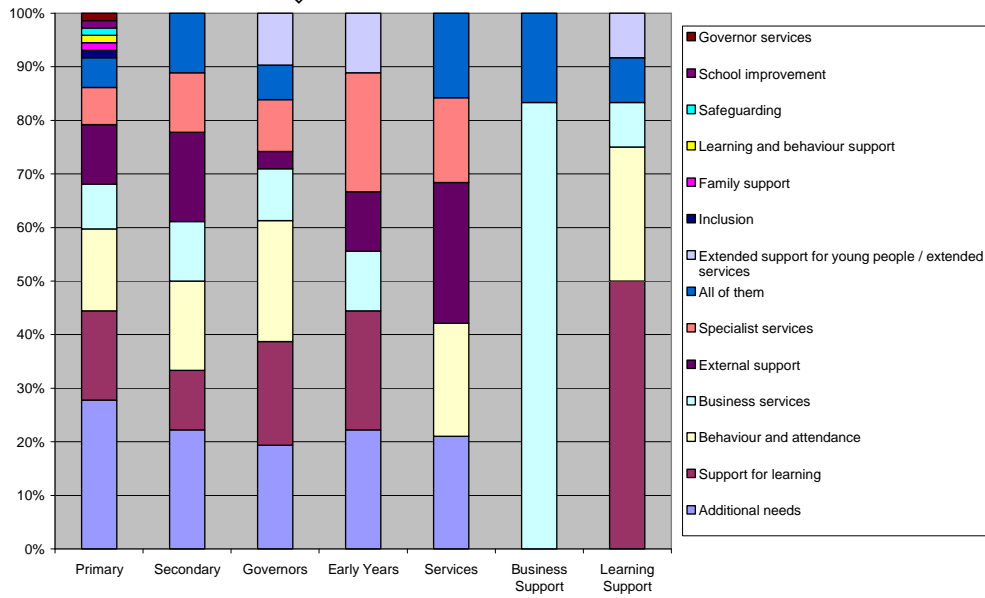


Figure 17

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

Themed Workshops By Group

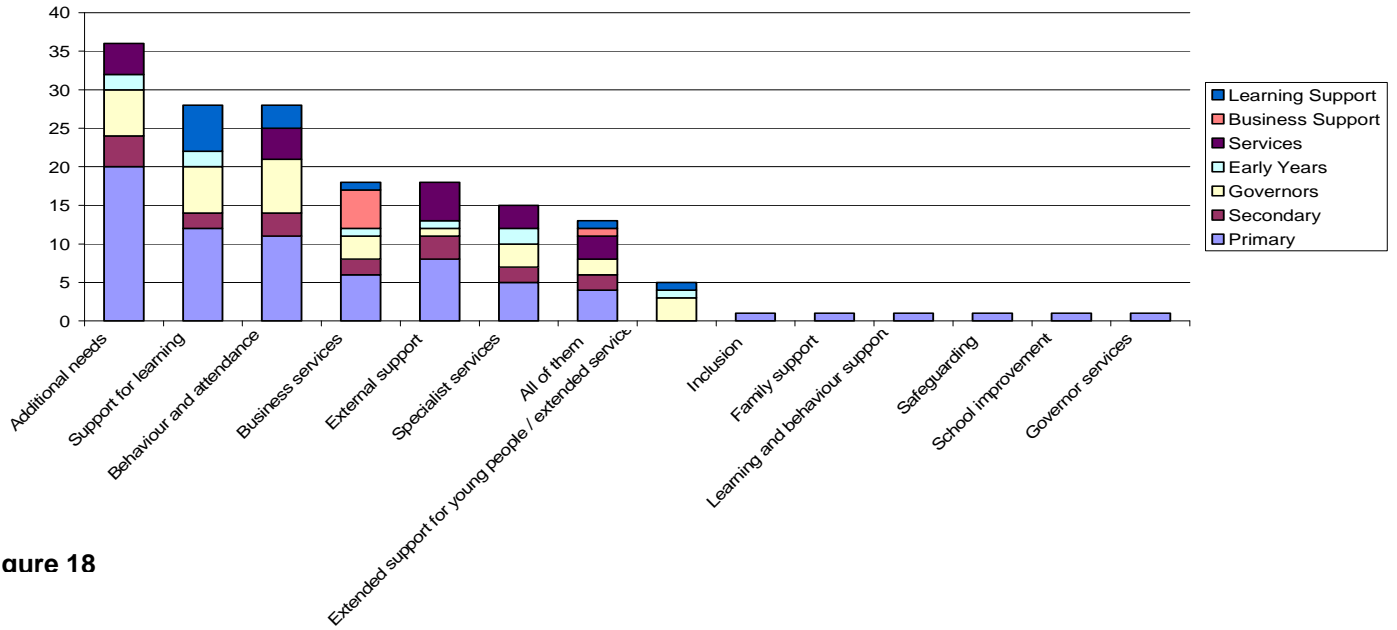


Figure 18

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

8 OUTCOMES FROM THE PROGRAMME: DEVELOPMENTS IN DECEMBER 2010

Overall 423 different delegates attended the programme, equating to over an 80% coverage of all schools. The planning group met on the 24th November for the final time to agree that a fragile mandate had been obtained to proceed and that work should continue to co-construct a shadow board and an implementation group which would be both a reformulation and an expansion of the core and planning groups which had delivered the programme.

Although progress in December has been hampered by the severe weather, the following developments have taken place:

- The Shadow Board led by the Director of Children's Services has been established
- A joint implementation group chaired by a Headteacher and a Senior Officer of the City Council has been established, along with an identified project manager to support the work.
- Steve Robinson to lead the development of local groups and schools working together as Co-Director of the programme
- Senior Officers to lead the re-design of City Council services
- Cross party sign up to support the continuation of this process should the political leadership of the Council change.

9 NEXT STEPS

Since November the following developments have taken place:

- An Interim Board has been established that involves the lead and shadow members for Children and Young People, the Director of Children's Services and representatives of headteachers and Chairs of Governors
- A Programme Board and identified programme management structure to deliver the work has been set up.
- A Head teacher has been appointed to lead the development of local groups and schools working together as Co-Director of the programme.
- Senior Officers to lead the re-design of City Council services towards a shared and traded services model.

The City Wide Learning Body was formally established on July 20th 2011 and currently more than 80% of Sheffield schools have "signed up" to be members. The CWLB has already begun to tackle an ambitious and wide ranging work programme, which will include developing, and implementing a new Education Strategy for the city.

Establishing the field of the future in children and young people's services

10 CONCLUSIONS ON THE PROGRAMME

Wicked problems need to engage the whole system and transformational processes and tight deadlines demand nimbleness, agility, speed and focus. For the whole thing to work it requires teamwork, purpose, leadership, commitment, willingness to take risks and a faith in the future. Above all it requires trust, co-creation, collaboration and partnership. We feel that we achieved all of these criteria in our programme and we would like to thank all those who helped plan, prepare and deliver as well as those who attended.

In times of uncertainty, transition and emergence we feel that the social and intellectual capital generated as part of our programme creates a field of opportunity and creativity within which we can progress and develop the work taking responsible decisions as the future unfolds. In doing this we are embracing the 21st Century approach to learning and development - 'Leadership for the common good' described by Kegan and Lahey (2010) where learning happens:

- In real work groups, infusing learning within the flow of work
- In loosely boundaried groups with tight connections to a new strategy which drives initiatives.
- Is time elastic, transformative and adaptive with direct accountability for learning

Our approach is characterised by 'leading from the future as it emerges' as described by Otto Scharmer in his Theory U (2009)

“We live in a time of massive institutional turmoil and failure. A time which requires a new consciousness and a new leadership capacity. This is an invitation to see the world in new ways and create a new approach to leadership.”

REFERENCES

- HOCK, Dee (1999) One From Many: VISA And The Rise Of The Chaordic Organisation ISBN 1576754766
- KEGAN, Robert and LAHEY, Lisa L. (2009) Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization ISBN. 1422117367
- SCHARMER, Otto (2009) Theory U: Leading From The Future As It Emerges ISBN 978-157675-763-5