

Nottingham City Council Equality Framework Case Study

Building Schools for the Future



The 'BSF' programme in Nottingham has been used to deliver much more than new schools. The opportunity for a total renewal of the secondary and special school estate has been harnessed to drive a programme of learning transformation reaching deep into the city's most disadvantaged communities. It directly addresses a key limiting factor in the lives of these children and their families – poor educational attainment leading to limited employment prospects. By providing innovative community based education, geared to the specific needs of local communities, it is set to raise aspirations and educational outcomes to new levels. Early prioritisation and tight programme management means that many of the benefits of the BSF programme will be realised in Nottingham despite recent changes in Government policy.

- *Equality mapping – Learning about the need*

The City Council took a targeted approach to its initial bid for BSF funding. The first eight schools selected were chosen following consideration of the multiple indices of deprivation, the percentage of free school meals recipients, and other deprivation indicators including the percentage of children with special educational needs.

This targeted bid was successful in realising £89 million of new investment in city schools. In addition, three new academies were founded bringing in a further £100 million approximately. The result is that the city's most deprived communities, together with all specialist Special Education Need (SEN) provision, are now benefitting from state of the art facilities.

- *Leadership – Using evidence to inform decisions and set priorities*

The approach taken to leadership and governance in our BSF programme has made sure wider social objectives are addressed. An award-winning Local Education Partnership (LEP) oversees the delivery of Nottingham's BSF programme and has delivered a number of equality objectives through the programme's private sector partner ("inspiredspaces"):

- Setting targets for local employment and local spend. To date approximately one third of the local labour force on the sites are from Nottingham and approximately £28 million (27%) has been with companies with an NG postcode and a further £48 million (47%) with companies within a 50 mile radius of Nottingham. This amounts to a 74% regional spend which has exceeded the target of 56%.
- Providing a trainee programme and local apprenticeships in the construction programme. To date, work placements have been provided for 78 apprentices.
- Work Experience placements through Connexions, Job Centre Plus and *Making the Connection*, getting neighbourhoods and local people involved and upskilled in the construction of the facilities.

- Helping people affected by homelessness find their feet in regular employment. To date, placements have been provided through the Business Action on Homelessness programme for 10 homeless people.
 - Supporting the long term unemployed back into work through training programmes.
 - Creating a single agency to foster the development of community use of new facilities and an enhanced extended schools programme of activities.
- *Workforce – Getting the right skills*

At the heart of the BSF programme is a determination to ensure that Nottingham's young people and their families are equipped with the qualifications and skills to participate and prosper from the economic growth of the city. The selection of *inspiredspaces* as the private sector partner was based on choosing a provider with a proven ability to deliver a community based approach to educational improvement. Parents and carers are being encouraged back into schools - for example at Big Wood School where a strong adult education presence is providing parents who may have missed out first time around with essential life skills. This helps not just with employability, but in giving parents the self esteem and confidence to value education and - most importantly - the education of their children.

The new schools are also in the forefront of plans to broaden the educational curriculum so that children – particularly those who are vulnerable - do not disengage from education in their later secondary school years. For example, vocational based diplomas have been introduced at Hadden Park High School in Bilborough.

The employment opportunities of the building programme have been harnessed through as apprenticeships targeted at local disadvantaged communities. *Inspiredspaces* established a local training centre in 2005 and 78 apprentices (to July 2010) have been successfully engaged through this programme.

- *Services – Delivering on the priorities*

The BSF programme has changed the way young people are being educated and harnessed new technologies to do this. In the initial bid for BSF funding, £10M was earmarked to provide an ICT managed service for all the schools benefiting from the BSF funding. This is now operational in three secondary schools, two academies and a primary school and will be rolled out to other schools as they are renovated or re-built. It will provide pupils and families with a complete and personalised 'virtual learning platform' available in school or at home 24 hours a day. It will include coursework, advice and guidance from the teacher.

- *Community Engagement – Measuring outcomes and reporting the results*

The 'visioning' work is the hallmark of Nottingham's BSF programme. The Council has helped provide creative 'visioning' sessions with the whole school community to help set out the potential for the BSF funding to do everything it can to provide 21st century community facilities.

Visioning workshops at each of the schools has identified:

- the competencies, skills and attitudes we want to foster in our children;
- how to develop learning spaces which are flexible to accommodate a wide variety of learning styles and learner settings;
- how to create an “agile” learning environment which can easily respond to future changes in timetable, curriculum and whole-school organisation;
- how to create a “community hub”, co-locating services at the heart of a local community, and;
- how to create a purpose-designed, dual use facility, that fosters ownership in the local community.

Pupils are given the opportunity to comment on the input from ‘adults’ including staff, parents, governors and members of the local community. As a result of pupils having an equal say to adult groups and feeling able to influence the final design, they have a strong sense of belonging and ownership for their new school. The new schools demonstrate how this early effort to involve communities is being realised.

Nottingham's BSF programme won the 'Best Education Project' award at the Public Private Finance awards 2010, a category which acknowledges big programmes currently being undertaken in the education sector, and the overall 'Grand Prix' award which recognises the best operational project that has delivered an outstanding improvement in public services for the benefit of the community that it serves.

Councillor David Mellen, Nottingham City Council's Portfolio holder for Children's Services, said: "I am delighted that Nottingham's BSF programme has received national recognition through these awards. Together they represent the truly innovative approach that is being taken to deliver excellence for children and young people in Nottingham, through our exciting BSF programme. All the partners working to deliver BSF in Nottingham have a mutual commitment to a shared vision of transforming education and regenerating neighbourhoods and I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate everyone involved on their success."

David Stewart OBE, headteacher of Nottingham's first special school built under the BSF programme, said: "I'm so proud to be working in this wonderful new school providing the best education for some of the most vulnerable children in the city. This is a truly 21st century school."

Staar Ballard and Saade Abdul who are pupils at The Nottingham University Samworth Academy (NUSA - one of the schools which has benefitted from the improvements) wrote about a visit to the new school buildings in their school magazine: "We are so lucky to have the opportunity to move into such an amazing building with facilities that will help us get the best out of our education."

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