Formal consultation regarding proposed change to working arrangements for Visiting Specialist teaching and support staff

In November 2013 a Kaizen Improvement event took place which considered Primary staffing. The Kaizen report states

2.5 The group felt that it is imperative to separate the current link between McCrone cover and visiting specialist provision. This practice is perceived to marginalise VS teachers from core staffing and in some cases reinforce unacceptable practices. Although the school may receive the specialist support that they require, meeting contractual class contact time becomes the main driver for such support. Difficulties in recruitment and periods of absence including those of Visiting Specialists has resulted in contractual class contact time being breached. This approach whilst designed to maximise the value of specialist support to the school, pupil and teacher development in practise is generally not succeeding. This is further aggravated through lack of time for class and VS teacher discussions at handover.

2.6 The removal of a link between VS and McCrone could realistically only be achieved by allocating VS in addition to a core allocation of McCrone. In medium to large schools this could be achieved by recruiting permanent core staff. In small schools it could possibly be supported through increasing the flexible days for covering HT management time to include McCrone time. This may not be wholly achievable but through a cluster or grouping approach to contracts then this has a potential to succeed. It should also be noted that around 70% of VS teachers are secondary qualified.

2.7 In this format the VS provision could have the potential to reduce the range of subjects currently provided and be targeted at specific curricular requirements to support the range of initiatives and requirements of the Scottish Government and Education Scotland Inspectorate.

As a result of this and other information gathered over an extended period of time and from a number of sources a repositioning of working arrangements for Visiting Specialist Teachers is proposed to be undertaken. This is necessary to improve service delivery and address the issues of non class contact provision, staff absence and availability of supply affecting primary schools. For all employees working as Visiting Specialists this will entail changes to the way in which you are deployed.

Building on this the key change in the proposals presented involves the move from the current centralised arrangement to an integrated core staffing approach, which it is envisaged will bring benefits for both employees and the service.

The long term aim is a model in which all staffing provision including non-class contact is included in each school’s staffing complement. The transition to this arrangement is being managed by a repositioning of the VS service, with the overall aim being to minimise the number of schools to be covered – a maximum of 4 schools for all staff. The basis of allocation will be the time required by schools for the purposes of non-class contact time and the available staff resource in the network.
For Visiting Specialists there will be a requirement to visit a significantly reduced number of schools. It is anticipated that this will:

- improve integration of staff in establishments
- increase job satisfaction and reduce feelings of isolation
- increase access to development opportunities
- improve teaching and learning as a result of increased knowledge of learner needs
- reduce the amount of travel associated with the job

For schools there will be a requirement for class teachers to resume responsibility for areas of the curriculum that will no longer be covered by Specialist teachers. Currently the use of Specialist teachers can, in some instances, result in lack of confidence, skills and understanding for some curriculum areas. It is anticipated that by providing a programme of support and CPD for schools this can be addressed.

The benefits for the service are anticipated to be improved service delivery, reduction in absence rates.

Visiting Specialists
The meeting you, and the VS Coordinators, attended on Monday 31 March 2014 in Hazlehead, Aberdeen, was to inform you about the proposed changes. You may still have questions and concerns about how changes may affect you personally and your employment with Aberdeenshire. A sheet of frequently asked questions is attached for information and will be added to throughout the consultation period.

The options open to you are outlined below in the section Deployment.

Schools and teachers
Clearly the proposed changes will impact on schools and teachers. All schools are encouraged to discuss the proposals and respond as a school to the consultation.

Consultation

Your comments and the impact they will have on the process

We believe the views of our employees are extremely important to ensure that reviews are effective and create a structure that meets the needs of the service. Although a great deal of information has previously been gathered about the current and future needs of the service, prior to developing the proposals, your input is also extremely important as you will have a good understanding of the area you are employed within and therefore an informed opinion on the proposals.

Your views will count and changes may be made to the proposals depending on the feedback that is received.

Collation of your feedback and who receives it

You are invited to make comments in relation to these proposals. The consultation will take place between 21 April and 12 May 2014.
The feedback should be sent back to Sheila Kelly, Senior Clerical Assistant, Visiting Specialist Service either directly or via your Trade Union representative by Monday 12 May 2014.

This information will then be organised, analysed and considered in detail. A project group will be formed to comprise of Deborah Masson, Paul Fallen, Helen Shanks, and representatives from the Trade Unions and Human Resources. This will allow for consideration of whether the feedback supports the proposals or whether a review of the proposals is required.

The proposals were presented to LNCT on Thursday 27 March and the LNCT Joint Secretary attended the meeting in Aberdeen. The unions will also be present at the area days on 29, 30 April and 1 May. There will be union representation at the subsequent meetings of the project group when consultation responses are considered.

**If the proposal is agreed**

If no major changes are required, the project group will meet mid May 2014 to plan the implementation of the changes. If the feedback supports the proposals, then VS will be asked to detail their preference for their preferred option for deployment and location and schools will be asked for their preferred specialism(s). Revised working arrangements will be drawn up taking account of network needs and preferences indicated by staff. This will take account of comments and amendments arising from the meetings from staff, managers and trade unions.

Employees will receive a letter to provide notification of variation of contract.

**If the proposal is not agreed**

If there are major changes that have to be implemented, then we have to go back to the senior management team for agreement of these changes, and the consultation process would begin again.

**Length of time involved in the process**

To minimise the uncertainty for both schools and staff the timescale for the proposed changes has been designed to fit with the cycle of the school year. It is anticipated that the changes will take effect from Monday 18 August 2014.

**Communication to Employees**

Further communication on this matter will be via email to your private email address.

**Next Steps**

All staff are requested to read the proposals carefully and consider their response. Feedback is sought in the form of a short questionnaire. The deadline for submission of completed questionnaires is Monday 12 May 2014.
CONSULTATION PROPOSALS

Deployment

What will this mean for individuals?

Visiting specialist staff will be integrated into the core staffing of primary schools. There will no longer be a requirement for Visiting Specialists to visit a large number of schools in one week.

Visiting Specialist staff will be able to indicate a preference for the options outlined:

1 – Staff deployed as specialist teachers but to a reduced number of schools, up to a maximum of 4 for a full time teacher.

2 – Primary registered teachers can request to return to primary class teacher position and indicate which other networks they are willing to be allocated. The expectation is that all such requests would be met.

3 – Secondary registered teachers can request to be matched to vacancy in their subject specialism and indicate which other networks they are willing to be allocated. Where Secondary registered teachers wish to be matched to a Secondary post and none are available, they will continue in the specialist role until such a vacancy occurs.

It is anticipated that most staff will request to continue deployment as Specialists, as in option one, allocated to a reduced number of schools and continuing to teach their specialism.

Deployment in the specialist role in the proposed new model will take place on the basis of school requirements for non-class contact time and the available staff resource. At cluster level schools will indicate their preferences for subjects and staff will also be able to indicate preferences for geographical location within a network.

The deployment of staff on the proposed basis will be carried out by network coordinators. Where possible preferences will be taken into consideration but there will be an element of placing required.

Line management arrangements for staff will be through the school to which they have the greatest number of allocated hours. Where staff are allocated to schools for an equal amount of time, line management arrangements will be at the base school. Should the proposals be accepted then base schools for all staff will be determined once deployment has been agreed.

Staff will continue with a network contract to facilitate movement between schools.

What will this mean for establishments?

- There will no longer be a rotational timetable with annual changes. Staff will be allocated to schools and be part of the core staff complement. Secondary
registered staff will still only be able to deliver their registered subject. Where Primary registered staff wish to continue in their specialism, they should be timetabled to do so.

- The number of specialisms allocated to schools will be significantly reduced. There will be an expectation that primary class teachers assume full responsibility for the delivery of all aspects of the curriculum not covered by the the specialist allocated to their class.

- The line management of staff will revert to schools. The existing management structure of the service will no longer be required.

- When a specialist teacher leaves, it is anticipated that replacement would be with a primary teacher adding to the core staffing within schools.

- However, management within the new model would be at cluster level and local decisions would allow for a local response to the needs of the cluster when decisions were taken regarding how to replace staff given that the provision of non-class contact time was maintained.

What will this mean for VS coordinators and VS Manager?

The removal of the existing management structure will mean that these roles will no longer be required.

What will this mean for clerical staff?

The removal of the existing management structure will mean that the associated support roles will no longer be required. However, given the small number of hours currently associated with this provision, agreement has been reached that alternative duties will be allocated to those staff who currently undertake the role of clerical support within networks. There will therefore be no reduction in hours for these members of staff.

Ways of Working

Each of the 17 networks in Aberdeenshire presents a different context in which the new ways of deployment would be implemented. Outlined below are examples of how the deployment might be approached. The 3 examples show a mix of large, medium and small schools, all large schools and one with a significant number of small schools.

Where possible, specialist teachers should be timetabled for whole days at schools although this will not always be possible (schools with odd number of classes will require ½ days). As at present, travelling time between schools during the school day shall be regarded as pupil contact time except during the midday break when
the teacher shall have a personal break of not less than 40 minutes. Any such reduced class contact time due to travel would have to be accommodated within the following allocations.

**Example Network 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>No of classes</th>
<th>NCCT required</th>
<th>Proposed allocation</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
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<td>1.6 fte</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.0 fte</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.6 fte</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
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<td>0.22</td>
<td>1.0 fte</td>
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<tr>
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<td>School 10</td>
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<td>0.22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Current Staff allocation = 9.6 fte  
FTe Allocation needed = 7.6 fte  
Excess during transition phase = 2.0 fte

Current number of subjects = 6  
1.0 fte available for staff tutor role.

**Example Network 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>No of classes</th>
<th>NCCT required</th>
<th>Proposed allocation</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>0.22</td>
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</table>

Current Staff allocation = 5.2 fte  
FTe Allocation needed = 4.3 fte  
Excess during transition phase = 0.9 fte

Current number of subjects = 4  
0.6 fte available for Staff tutor role at current staffing levels
Example Network 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>No of classes</th>
<th>NCCT required</th>
<th>Proposed allocation</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.0 fte</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.8 fte</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Staff allocation = 6.8 fte
Fte Allocation needed = 5.9
Excess during transition phase = 0.9

Current number of subjects = 7
0.8 fte available for staff tutor role.

Facilitating Flexibility

The current arrangement provides a rotational timetable covering all available specialisms. The proposed system will not provide this. Local agreement regarding deployment could be accommodated providing there is no negative impact on the provision of non-class contact time. The process would have to be managed at cluster level and take into account travel time during school day.

Example

By local agreement, where staff are blocked to one school or group of max 4 schools, it may be possible for a straight swap to occur for an agreed period of time (e.g. terms 3 and 4) to support curriculum delivery.

Curriculum Support for Establishments

Given the move from a distributed to a core approach there will be a need to provide opportunity for collaborative staff development. To meet this need it is proposed to create the role of Primary Curriculum Support Tutor. We are looking to provide this collaborative element within the deployment to core staffing, but where the need arises or local context dictates it may be necessary to create the role as a seconded post for 23 months in line with Aberdeenshire Council’s Secondment policy.

The role of the Primary Curriculum Support Tutor will be:

- To contribute to a programme of staff development designed to build capacity within schools.
- To actively encourage and promote staff development focussed on the provision of high quality learning experiences across all schools in Aberdeenshire.
- To establish sustainable approaches to staff development in the identified curriculum areas.
• To promote learning and teaching of the highest possible quality and to maximise the attainment of all pupils, working closely with staff in schools and other development officers.
• Develop appropriate curriculum support material.

A job description including line management arrangements will be agreed at LNCT.
Once the preferences of staff have been determined and deployment patterns have been finalised recruitment to these posts will take place and fixed term contracts issued to backfill. At the end of the secondment, tutors will return to their allocated posts

It is envisaged that the disciplines will be determined by network need, national and local curriculum priorities. There will be some central coordination of these posts to ensure that all networks receive support for staff to enhance skills, knowledge and understanding, and develop staff confidence.

CONSULTATION

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will I still receive my travel allowance?
Under the new ways of working the need to travel between schools will be greatly reduced. In general all staff will be travelling less than at present and it is the intention that travel during the day will be minimised. Schools with an odd number of classes will still require ½ days of specialist allocation (eg 3 classes will require 1½ day specialist allocation).

For those with more than one school to cover then there will be no change – they will continue with the essential user allowance and claim additional mileage from base.

For those allocated to a single school then they will lose their essential car user allowance.

2. Will my base school change?
Yes, in most cases staff will have the location of their post changed. It is envisaged that the base school for each post will be the school in which the largest number of hours are worked. Should there be an increase in the mileage from the old base to new then the policy for excess mileage will be applied.

3. Why is the timetable for implementation so short?
The situation is acute and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. As the changes are so significant there would be considerable impact in schools if they were to happen mid session. By aiming for an implementation date of the start of the next academic session Senior Management Teams will be better able to ensure that they use the available staff effectively.
4. How does this impact on me if I am on a Career Break or Secondment?
Initially you will be deployed as “option 1”. On return to your substantive post you will be able to express your preference for each of the identified options.

5. How does this affect me if I am on a fixed term contract?
You will be deployed as “option 1” as the other options would have implications for the substantive post holder on their return.

6. What are the implications for my contract?
You will be issued a contract variation which will detail the changes to the location of your post. Current essential car users who transfer to a single school will lose that allowance. The changes will have no impact on your salary.

7. Will there be any “packages”?
As all the posts will be matched as part of the deployment process there will be no excess and therefore no expectation that voluntary severance or ‘enhanced’ retirement packages will be available to teaching staff.

8. What will happen to the existing management structure?
As all staff will be deemed to be part of core staffing there will be no need to maintain the existing structure of Manager and Network Coordinators. All staffing needs will be met within schools by Head Teachers.

9. How will the deployment be agreed?
Once staff have indicated which option they would prefer and schools asked for their preferences of specialisms then the deployment exercise will be undertaken by Network Coordinators with support from the Visiting Specialist Manager.

The overall aim will be to minimise the number of schools to be covered – a minimum of 4 schools for full time staff. The basis of allocation will be the fte required by schools and the available staff resource.

10. If deployed as to teach my specialism in one school can I be asked to do supply to cover absence?
Primary specialists will be timetabled to cover classes as part of the 25 hour pupil week. If used to cover an “absence” then the contractual 22½ hours of the class teachers would be breached. You can only be asked to cover an absence in a school, as additional hours, if you are part time.

11. Will Secondary registered staff be asked to teach the whole primary curriculum?
No, you will only be able to teach your registered subject.

12. Will my timetable change every session as it does now?
No, once completed for the implementation date the pattern of staff allocation will be considered fixed.

By local agreement by schools and specialist staff, where staff are blocked to one school or group of max 4 schools, it may be possible for a straight swap to occur for a limited period of time to support curriculum delivery.
13. When and how will I be notified of my new timetable?
All timetables for staff who have gone through the deployment exercise will be issued to staff before the end of session in the usual manner by network coordinators.

14. Will I be able to indicate preferences for deployment, i.e. which schools?
You will be invited to indicate preferences for the geographical area of a network but there can be no guarantee that requests for individual schools will be met. You will not be asked to move to another network, although you may request this.

15. If you undertake the staff tutor support role, what happens at the end of the 23 month period?
All staff will initially be deployed according to option 1 and this will remain their substantive post and at the end of the secondment you will return to this post.

16. How will the subjects for the staff tutor support role be determined?
This will be responsive to network need.

17. What has happened to all the information gathered at the meeting in Aberdeen?
There were many opinions expressed on the day via the post-it note exercise and these will be included as feedback from the consultation process.