



**Children and Families Scrutiny
Academisation Briefing**

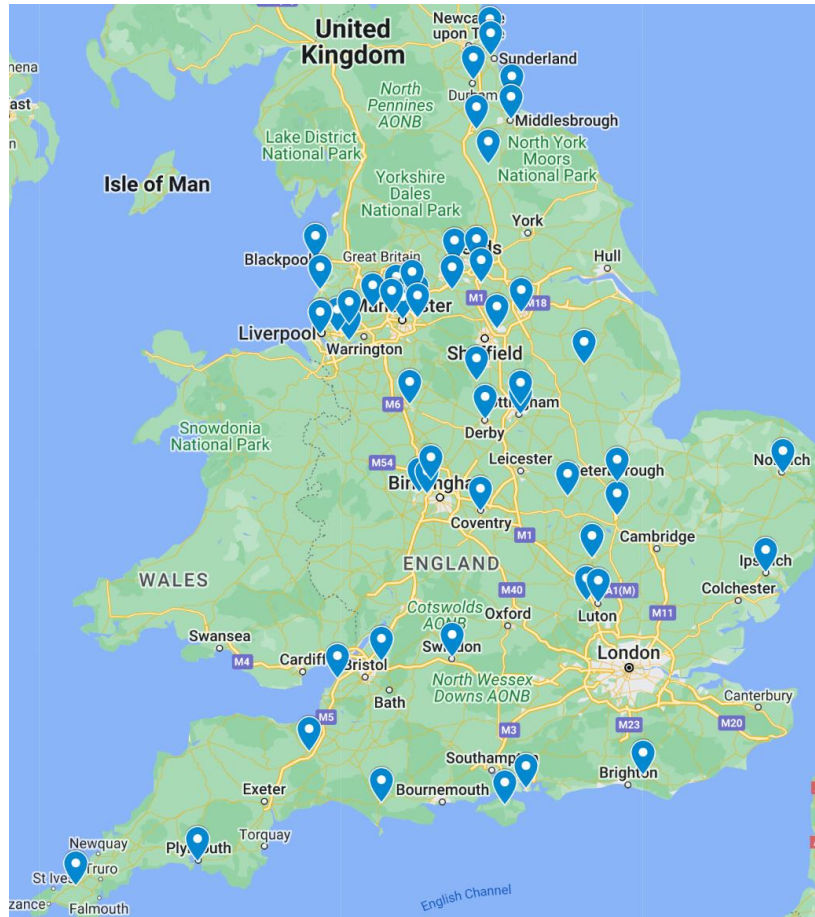


Background

- The government published a new Schools White Paper entitled 'Opportunity for All' in March 2022
- This set out the intention to:
 - See all schools in 'strong trusts' by 2030
 - Achieve greater clarity about the respective roles for the Department for Education, Local Authorities, Ofsted, Multi-academy trusts and the Schools Adjudicator
 - Create 'Education Investment Areas' where standards are lower (following the end of Opportunity Areas)
 - Replace Regional Schools Commissioner offices with Regional Teams
 - Raise standards in existing trusts



Education Investment Areas



- 55 Education Investment Areas nationally
- Intended to represent the local areas with the lowest educational standards
- 'Investment' is probably a misnomer as there appears to be very little investment attached
- Somerset was the location of the West Somerset Opportunity Areas which attracted £5m of investment into that area over five years
- West Somerset will now be the SW's only 'Priority Education Investment Area' – it is yet to be seen what this will translate into
- The most significant positive announcement has been in relation to investment in high speed broadband for rural schools, prioritising West Somerset



DfE plans for full academisation

- We are working very collaboratively with the Department for Education and Diocese of Bath and Wells on areas of shared interest
- It is clear there is significant scope to create a more sensible distribution of schools and trusts

However we are mindful that

- 2030 is eight years away
- Many members (cross-party) are not enthusiastic about full academisation.
- Since the publication of the White Paper there has been significant political turmoil and a general election is rapidly approaching



Priorities for a reformed system

Trust solutions for Somerset that:

- Meet the needs of pupils with SEND through Inclusive Education
- Address persistent absence and school suspensions/exclusions
- Raise the attainment of vulnerable/FSM pupils
- Can be held publicly accountable for their performance
- Develop and share excellent practice in these domains across the system



Priorities for a reformed system

- 1) Open and transparent public consultation on plans
- 2) MATs, SATs, and LA schools on an equal footing
- 3) Building capacity in a low-capacity system
- 4) Meeting the needs of small schools
- 5) Meeting the needs of specialist schools
- 6) System leaders who demonstrate their commitment to a positive culture
- 7) Developing joint commissioning and accountability

Big message #1

DfE aims for all schools to be academies by 2030

Big message #2

It will not be good for anyone – schools, communities, DfE, Diocese or trusts, if this happens too quickly or in an unmanaged way

Big message #3

The trusts of today will not be the trusts of tomorrow. This is not a situation where choices will become harder over time. Likely they will get easier.





Patchwork and Somerset Partnership

- We have been talking to schools since November about revamping our traded offer ('the Patchwork')
- A group of secondary schools has put together a partnership with feeder primary schools to collaborate on school improvement ('Somerset Partnership')
- Neither is a replacement for academisation
- The traded offer is a new traded offer. It is intended to mirror how trusts support schools more closely, but an LA cannot be a trust.
- The Partnership is similar to existing groups in the county known as 'Community Learning Partnerships'

Big message #4

The Patchwork is not an alternative to academisation and joining a trust.

Big message #5

The Somerset Partnership is not an alternative to academisation and joining a trust.

Big message #6

Only joining a trust is joining a trust.





Local authority MATs

- There has been interest and press coverage on the topic of 'Local authority MATs'
- We have been asked if we intend to pursue this option
- This is not our intention because:
 - The changes being proposed do not make an LA MAT any different to existing MATs in any material way
 - Somerset already has many MATs
 - If a new MAT is needed we would step up at the time that became apparent, but it is too early to say
 - Our LA teams support LA maintained schools but also academies. If our staff stepped away to set up a MAT, this would potentially destabilise other arrangements.

Big message #7

We are not planning an ‘LA MAT’ per se. An LA MAT is just a MAT that the LA has had a role in setting up.

However, that does not mean that there will be no new MATs for LA schools to join over the course of the next eight years.

If through our shared plan it becomes evident that there is an identified MAT need that no existing MATs can fill, we will actively get involved in establishing one.

