

# Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

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Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
<b>Committee Room 1 – Senedd</b>	<b>Marc Wyn Jones</b>
Meeting date: 16 September 2015	Committee Clerk
Meeting time: 09.15	0300 200 6565
	<a href="mailto:SeneddCYPE@assembly.wales">SeneddCYPE@assembly.wales</a>

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## 09.15 – 09.30 – Private Pre-meeting

### 1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

(09.30)

### 2 Discussion with Regional Education Consortia – Education Achievement Service for South East Wales (EAS)

(09.30 – 10.30)

(Pages 1 – 42)

EAS

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper 1

Steve Davies, Managing Director – EAS

### 3 Discussion with Regional Education Consortia – Central South Consortium

(Pages 43 – 46)

(10.30 – 11.30)

Central South Consortium

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper 2

Hannah Woodhouse, Managing Director – Central South Consortium

Deborah McMillan, Corporate Director – Bridgend and Lead Director of the  
Consortium

Chris Elmore, Chair of Joint Committee



## **4 Papers to note**

**Letter from the Chair of Health and Social Care Committee – Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill** (Pages 47 – 48)

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 3

**Letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee – P-04-628 to Improve Access to Education and Services in British Sign Language** (Pages 49 – 50)

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 4

**Letter from the Minister for Education and Skills – Inquiry into supply teaching**

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 5 (Pages 51 – 53)

**Letter from the Minister for Education and Skills – Establishment of Qualifications Wales** (Pages 54 – 56)

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 6

**Letter from the Presiding Officer – Senedd@event** (Page 57)

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 7

**Letter from Presiding Officer – Draft Wales Bill** (Page 58)

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 8

**Letter from the Minister for Health and Social Services – CAMHS** (Pages 59 – 60)

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 9

**Letter from the Chair of Petitions Committee – P-04-552 Child Protection**

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 10 (Pages 61 – 62)

**Letter from the Minister for Education and Skills – Grant-in-Aid allocation letter to Qualifications Wales** (Pages 63 – 68)

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 11

**Letter from the Minister for Education and Skills – Inquiry into Educational  
Outcome for Children from Low Income Households** (Pages 69 – 84)  
CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 12

**Additional information from the Welsh Language Commissioner following  
attendance at meeting on 8 July** (Pages 85 – 90)  
CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 13

**Letter from the Minister for Health and Social Services – Review of the Financial  
Ring Fencing Arrangements for Mental Health Services in Wales** (Page 91)  
CYPE(4)-21-15 – Paper to note 14

**5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the  
public from the meeting for the remainder of the meeting**  
(11.30)

**6 Welsh Government draft Budget 2016 – 2017 – consideration of  
draft letters**  
(11.30 – 12.00)

CYPE(4)-21-15 – Private paper 15 (Pages 92 – 104)

Document is Restricted

**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales**  
**Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education**  
**Committee**

**CYPE(4)-21-15 - Papur | Paper 1**

**Ymateb gan : EAS (Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg I Dde Ddwyrain Cymru)**

**Response from : EAS (Education Achievement Service for South East Wales)**

**Report on the EAS/SEWC response to the Welsh Audit Office / Estyn remit review of Consortia, published in June 2015**

**Steve Davies**

## **1. Background**

Estyn and the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) undertook fieldwork together in October 14 to January 15 to review the progress of the implementation of regional consortia working since 2012.

The WAO were looking particularly at the effectiveness of governance arrangements. Estyn were reporting on the progress being made by consortia to provide school improvement services. were also keen to use the process to develop a framework through which consortia could be inspected. The framework is due in September 2015 and inspections of all four regional consortia will follow in the Spring/Summer of 2016.

## **2. EAS/SEWC response to the findings**

We found the report a fair reflection overall of our region's position at the time of the review. The recommendations were useful and we were glad that it was noted that all regions had already begun to respond well to the early feedback given to us. At the time of the visit there was insufficient data available to Estyn and the WAO to make judgement on the impact of the EAS on examination and test outcomes for the region. The outcomes data currently available from 2012 to 2015 show year on year improvements, above those for Wales as a whole, across all key stages.

## **3. History of the EAS/SEWC**

In September 2012 the five local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen formed an Education Achievement Service (EAS) which is designed to raise education standards in South East Wales.

Standards in schools had got progressively worse and secondary school banding information revealed that South East Wales had the highest number of schools in the lower bands. This information highlights the underperformance in schools, and the need for a significant shift in the way that education services are structured to support improvement. It also showed where the greatest need is in the region and where the EAS would need to focus its resources.

The EAS has been created by the five local authorities to raise education standards. By working together as part of an integrated service to support and challenge schools effectively, enhance front line services and make the most of the available resources, progress will take place quickly and effectively.

The EAS was established as a not for profit limited company with the great majority of key staff transferring through TUPE arrangements. A limited number of external appointments were made in the summer term 2012. The governance structure of the EAS includes a Company Board, responsible for the efficient and effective delivery of the service and a Joint Executive Group (JEG), made up of LA Cabinet members and CEOs, who hold the service to account for the quality of business planning and delivery. In the autumn term 2012 and early 2013 three of the constituent LAs were placed in Special Measures by Estyn. Since that time the EAS has worked with those LA members and officers, along with Intervention Boards to increase the LA capacity for school improvement, associated services and corporate governance.

From the outset in 2012, the EAS has provided all of the services recommended by Robert Hill in his 2013 report. These include Challenge adviser, data, governor support, literacy, numeracy, welsh, foundation phase, digital learning, physical literacy and 14-19 services.

A major review of services in the summer term of 2013 resulted in a strengthening of the Challenge Adviser service through the appointment of a Principal Challenge Adviser to lead the work in each LA.

In 2012/13 the EAS core funding from the 5 LAs amounted to £4.4 million which was 12% less than that spent by these LAs on these services in 2011/12. In 2015 the core funding is £3.5m which is approximately 22% less than that which was spent in 2011/12. The performance figures below show the year on year improvements across all 5 LAs. Since September 2012 we have reduced staff from 135.1 to 101. A key focus of our work is delivering value for money and increased efficiency in our work in the region, of which the performance against costs are an important measure.

Independent annual surveys demonstrate that there are strong relationships between the EAS and schools within the SEWC region. Appendix 1 gives a number of examples of where schools express their satisfactions with the service. It also enables LAs and EAS to review schools understanding of their respective roles. This approach also provides valuable feedback on areas for improvement and these are also provided in Appendix 1.

#### **4. Progress against areas for improvement**

As the remit visit in region took place at the beginning of November 2014, the EAS engaged in setting out an improvement plan from that time, based on the oral feedback from Estyn and the WAO. This plan was agreed with SEWC Directors, constituent LAs and the EAS Board and was built into the 2015-2018 Business Plan. When the final report was published in May 2015 the EAS reviewed progress against those areas identified in the oral feedback and added specific actions to those areas which were not identified in the oral feedback. These plans were agreed through the EAS Governance structure.

#### **5. Key strategies and progress in addressing recommendations**

##### **5.1. Business planning and delivery.**

The 2015/16 EAS Business plan was strengthened significantly in the light of the recommendations. It is now a 3 year plan with SMART targets and costed programmes. The plan, which includes LA appendices for each LA have been agreed by each LA cabinet. Each service area has a detailed service plan. Every member of staff is subject to a Performance Review cycle which is linked strongly to the service plans. There is a robust cycle of self-evaluation and quality assurance, which is linked to JEG meetings, Board meetings and Welsh Government Challenge and Review events. The EAS Company Board now has a comprehensive Risk Policy which identifies responsibilities and reporting requirements at all levels of the organization.

The Remit report recognised the steps being taken by the EAS to record and demonstrate value for money. This model has been further strengthened to demonstrate the impact of investment of time and resource related to improvement strategies at school, LA and regional level.

## **5.2. Quality of governance and scrutiny.**

“The consortium using a company, EAS, is closer to a commissioned service to the extent that the company is a separate legal entity, albeit wholly owned by the local authorities, and the company board directors are not the cabinet members with responsibility for education.” *WAO Report*

“One consortium, EAS, with agreement from the Welsh Government, has recently decided not to have an advisory board as set out in the National Model. Instead, they will appoint some of the expected members of an advisory board as non-executive directors to the company board and recognise the ‘Joint Executive Group’ (consisting of directors of education and cabinet lead members) as the coordinating group for commissioning and monitoring EAS but sitting outside the EAS structure.” *WAO Report*

The above sections from the WAO report recognise the progress the region had made to securing robust and coherent governance and scrutiny structures. The EAS Board and JEG structures are further supplemented by a South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) group of LA directors and the EAS Managing director. This group meets on a bi weekly basis to enable the development and implementation of policy and the scrutiny of practice and outcomes. In addition. The EAS reports regularly to LA scrutiny meetings and an Audit Committee made up of the 5 LA Scrutiny representatives provide challenge and support to the EAS Board.

The legal agreements which underpin the relationship between the 5 LAs and the EAS have been revised to reflect the arrangements

The SEWC group of Directors have also established a common cycle of scrutiny agendas which focus on the performance of the EAS.

There is a designated Challenge Adviser working closely with Diocesan authorities. A cycle of meetings are held with Diocesan Directors and they are involved closely in consultations and the formulation of pre inspection reports for faith schools.

## **5.3. Consistency of Challenge Advisers work**

The role of the Challenge Adviser (CA) in the region has been significantly strengthened over the past two years. Much has been done to improve the rigour in the quality assurance of their work with schools through enhanced line management systems, guidance and Performance Development Reviews. Critical to this development has been the appointment of five Principal Challenge Advisers who have the key responsibility for linking with each of the five Local Authorities (LAs) and for ensuring that there is limited variance in the work of the CAs within and across the region. The development of the role of the CA has been recognised through the responses from headteachers in the annual survey where 90% agreed that their CA knows their school well and provides appropriate and effective challenge to improve.

Feedback from the survey does, however point to further development required in the areas of supporting development planning and tracking progress of pupils towards targets. The Challenge Adviser team are currently engaged in development programmes to strengthen these areas.

#### **5.4. Strengthening collaboration across regions**

There is now a timetabled programme of monthly meetings of Consortia managing Directors. These are planned to coincide with planned meetings with senior Welsh Government officials. These meetings enable joint planning against national and local requirements. They also enable the MDs to constructively challenge WG on the implementation of policy and offer alternative strategies where it is felt appropriate.

Independent of these arrangements, the consortia have also established a number of collaborative initiatives. The most significant of these has been the successful tender to Welsh Government to deliver the Securing Teacher Assessment Programme of External Verification. This 3 year programme, with a value in excess of £1 million was jointly constructed by the 4 Managing Directors and involves officers and headteachers working across consortia to deliver the outcomes required.

The EAS works very closely with Central South Consortia (CSC). This includes joint planning of major initiatives such as the development of the Welsh Baccalaureate, Digital Learning, support to Welsh medium schools and the Physical Literacy programme.

The regional consortia have also established a 2 day practice sharing event involving their Senior Management Teams. This involves good practice presentations, workshops and development planning for current and emerging programmes.

#### **5.5. Tackling the impact of deprivation on upon education outcomes**

A tackling poverty champion has been appointed and is leading major work in this area. A key development from April 2015 has been the implementation of a programme in each school which requires the school to set out how the resource from the pupil deprivation grant (PDG) is allocated and enables the monitoring of the impact of this investment on outcomes. Challenge Advisers work closely with headteachers to both monitor and evaluate the impact of these investments. This is being supplemented by a practice sharing project linking schools with strong evidence of success with schools who face significant challenges in this area.

#### **5.6. Improve the quality and range of support to school**

There has been a wide range of support available within the EAS from the outset in September 2012. For the first year the major focus was on English/Literacy, Mathematics/Numeracy, Welsh and Foundation Phase. During this period the service moved the balance of provision from school based staff attending training days to more school-based support, making more use of expertise available across schools in the region.

Since September 2014, this model has been extended further. We have extended the use of good practice in schools and established major networks of training opportunities in leadership at all levels and teaching across all phases and subject areas (including non-core subjects) and digital learning across the curriculum. This school to school model has been harnessed by schools and now a major lever in the region's school improvement strategy.

#### **5.7. Strengthen financial management arrangements**

Estyn and the WAO recognised the additional challenges of operating as a private company delivering services within the public sector. Historical arrangements for funding and monitoring grant allocations to schools and LA support services have required adaptations within the SEWC region. Following the remit visit we have increased staffing in our finance department, developed

key financial arrangements for grant allocation and expenditure and monitoring and evaluation and established strengthened review processes with our banker LA.

## **6. Issues Welsh Government should be taking up**

### **6.1. Clarity of responsibilities**

Welsh Government has involved the regions in a review of the National Model, led by Robert Hill. This has helped reinforce the importance of the legal responsibilities of each group to each other and to Welsh Government. There will continue to be a focus on this as the implementation of national policies is undertaken. This is particularly so in areas where the relationship between LA responsibilities are interrelated with school improvement accountabilities, for example looked after children and additional learning needs.

### **6.2. Business Planning**

Good progress was made in 2015/16 in clarifying Welsh Government's business planning requirements of regional consortia. This led to a more common approach and a stronger focus on the outcomes required from the services provided. There was also further clarification on the need to reflect the services provided to the region as a whole and those that were specific to individual LAs.

It is important these developments are built upon for the 2016/17 year with early opportunities to review the effectiveness of this year's model in advance of any refinements to expectations for next year.

Welsh Government can further facilitate cross consortia working in this area through supporting peer reviews and the sharing of best practice.

### **6.3. School funding**

The Welsh Government Department for Education needs to review how grant and revenue budgets are set, allocated and reviewed to ensure as much efficiency in the system as possible. The Minimum Funding Guarantee is welcome and needs to continue and be monitored across the country. In particular, a number of flexibilities in relation to the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) were announced last year which have yet to be realised in practice because of retained terms and conditions around predecessor grants. The Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) grant are both very significant levers, focused at the most vulnerable, whilst building sustainable capacity in the school system. They are crucial to ongoing levels of improvement, whilst continuing to focus on efficiency and value for money. Most immediately it would be helpful if work were done as early as possible this autumn to set grant budgets so that we can indicate funding levels to schools to plan for improvement work.

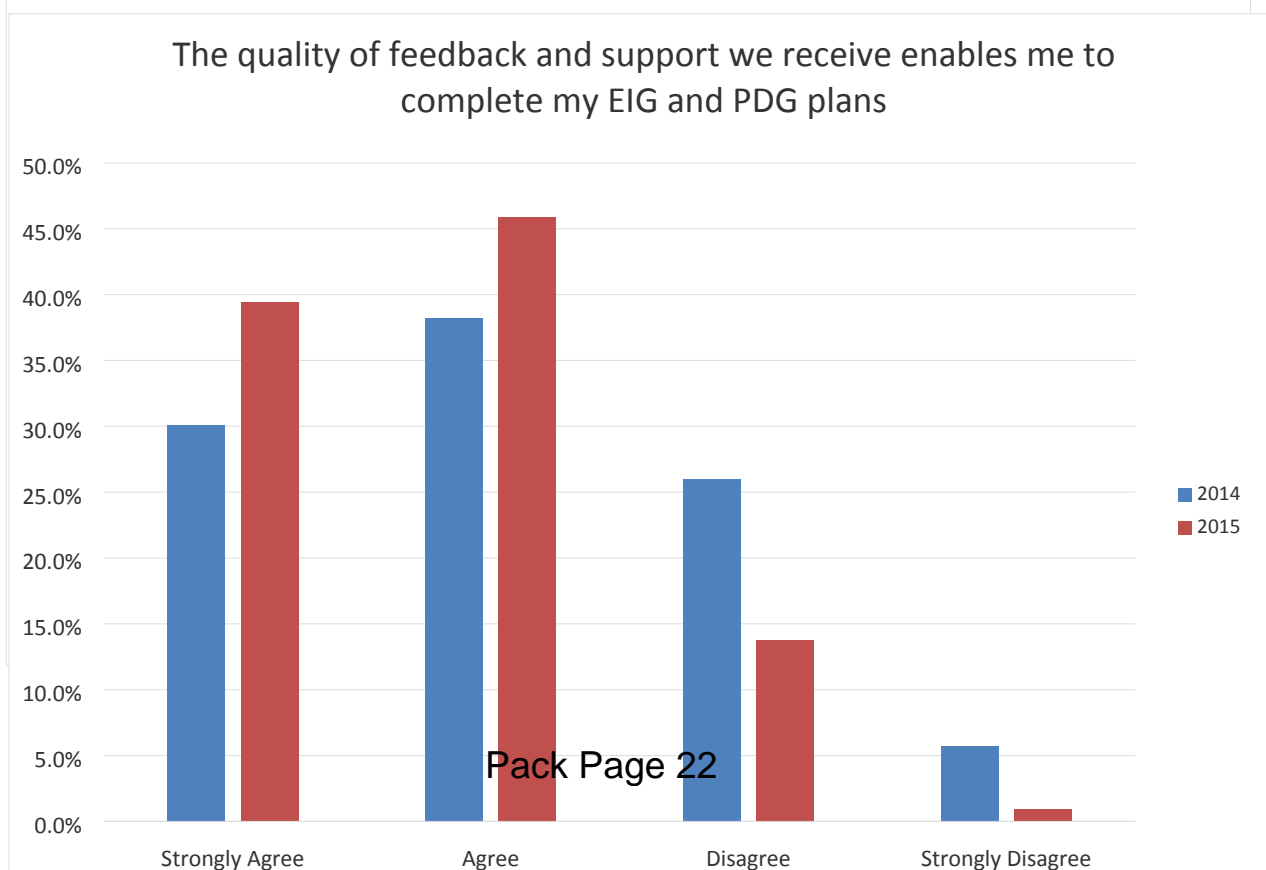
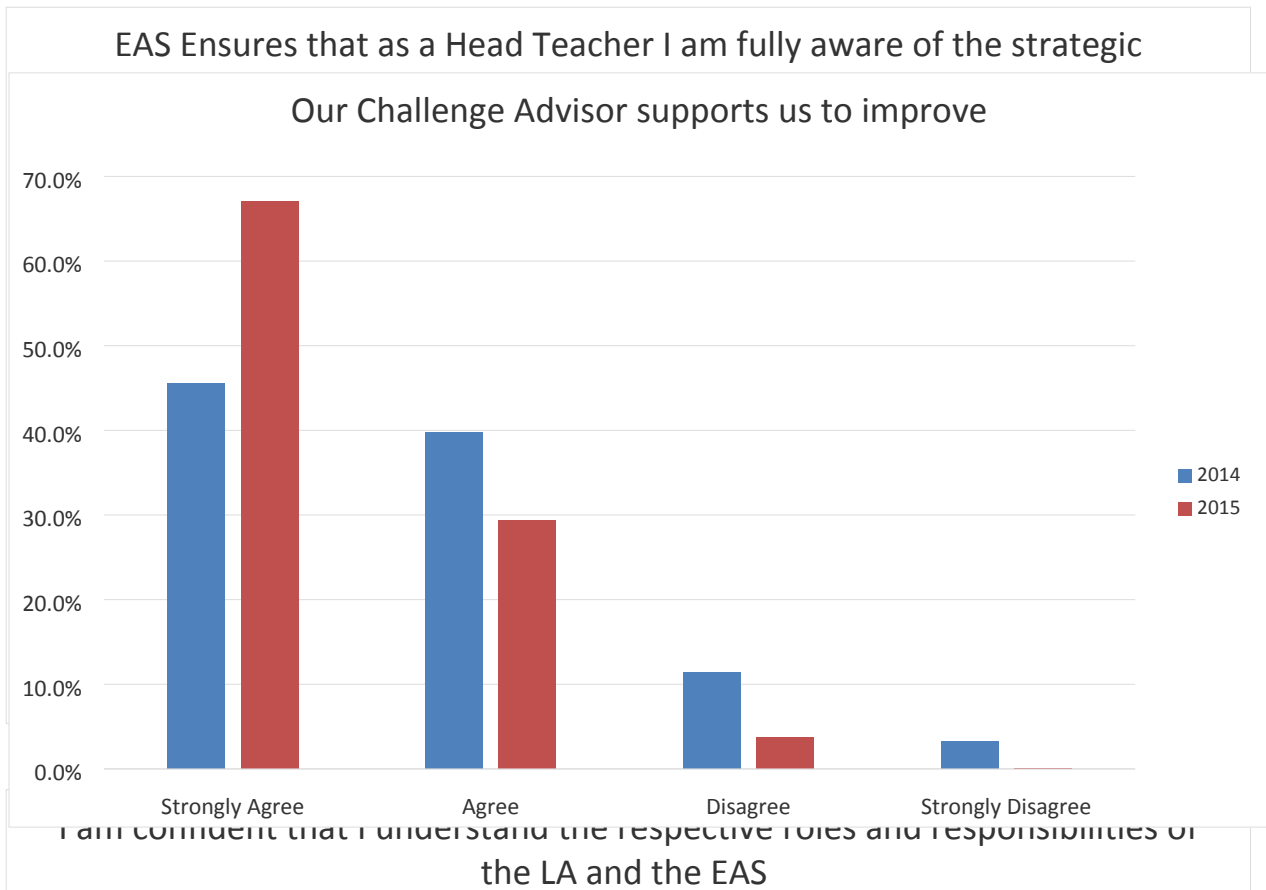
### **6.4. Carefully planned engagements of regional consortia in Policy Implementation**

Good progress was made in 2014/15 in involving regional school improvement services in the implementation strategies associated with the LNF and introduction of new GCSEs. This enabled coordinated planning and funding and sharing of practice across the region.

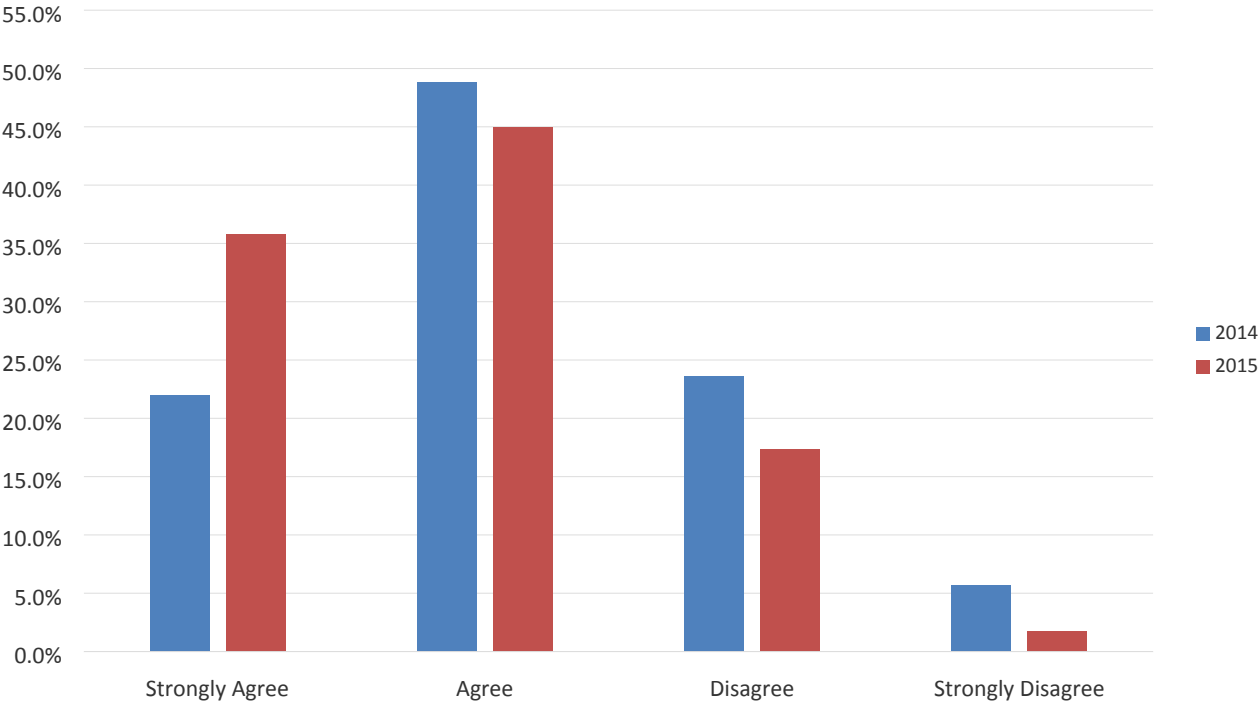
Implementing the recommendations of "Successful Futures" will be a major challenge for the education profession in Wales and regional consortia will need to play a major role. The establishment of a "Change Board" has been an important step in ensuring key stakeholders are effectively engaged, and is welcomed. One of the key responsibilities of this group will be to strive for successful innovation while ensuring the progress made in over the past 3 years by

consortia is built upon. The balance between Welsh Government and consortia leadership of policy implementation will need to be regularly checked for the Change Board.

## Independent Survey of SEWC schools on the performance of the EAS (2014 – 2015)



### Our Challenge Advisor has made significant impact on supporting the school's individual pupil tracking and target setting process



Owen Evans  
Dirprwy Ysgrifennydd Parhaol • Deputy Permanent Secretary

Grwp Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus  
Education and Public Services Group



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Mr Darren Millar AM  
Chair to the Public Accounts Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

7 July, 2015

Dear Darren

**Auditor General's report: "Achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia – an early view"**

In response to your letter of 3 June, please find attached at annex A, a Welsh Government response to the Auditor General's report: "Achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia – an early view."

You will be aware that the Auditor General asked for the study at this early stage in the development of the consortia in order to provide assurance of progress and to identify areas where additional work may be required. The report has been helpful in clarifying our approach to consortia working and our response to the recommendations reflects this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'O. Evans', written in a cursive style.

Owen Evans  
Deputy Permanent Secretary – Education and Public Services

**Auditor General's report: *Achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia – an early view***

**Welsh Government's response to the recommendations**

**Introduction**

The Auditor General for Wales asked the Wales Audit Office (WAO) to carry out a study on the Welsh Government's approach to improving schools through regional consortia.

The WAO and Estyn carried out joint fieldwork visits to each regional consortium and evidence was shared between the two organisations. The WAO and Estyn reports were jointly published on 3 June 2015.

The fieldwork visits took place between November 2014 and January 2015. The review involved the scrutiny of a wide range of evidence from schools, local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional consortia and the Welsh Government. In addition the WAO and Estyn attended, in an observer capacity, the Ministerial review and challenge sessions undertaken in October and November 2014.

The report focuses on progress in the delivery of school improvement through regional consortia. In particular it concentrates on the development of regional consortia governance structures which are carried out by means of either joint committees or, in the case of the South East Wales Consortium, through a company structure. The WAO felt that this approach was new and the effectiveness of governance arrangements would be essential for the achievement of improved outcomes for learners in Wales.

The study was intended to provide assurance on progress and to identify areas where further work may be required to ensure that suitable governance and financial structures for the system are set in place.

With the field work having been completed less than a year in to the implementation of the National Model for Regional Working (1 April 2014), the report provides an early indication of the progress being made by the consortia.

Verbal feedback was provided by the WAO and Estyn to each consortium at the end of the fieldwork exercise; as a result, each consortium is already progressing specific recommendations. A further progress check was undertaken by officials as part of the pre-planned summer review and challenge sessions. These sessions were held across Wales between 25 June and 3 July 2015 and have contributed to the collective all Wales response to the WAO recommendations provided below.

**Recommendation One - To clarify the nature and operation of the consortia.**

WAO found there to be continuing uncertainty about some aspects of the nature of regional consortia and their present and future scope. WAO therefore recommend:

- The Welsh Government should take full account of the statutory responsibilities of local authorities, and take appropriate legal advice, when considering changes to the roles it expects of local authorities and the regional consortia.
- The Welsh Government should update the National Model to be less prescriptive on the structure under joint committees or boards whilst maintaining a focus on outcomes.
- The Welsh Government and local authorities should develop and agree a consistent approach to the role of regional consortia and the Welsh Government in school improvement interventions so that all parties are clear what they should be involved in and responsible for.
- Local authorities should clarify whether consortia services are jointly provided or are commissioned services (services provided under a joint committee arrangements are jointly provided services and are not commissioned services).

### **Accept points one to three**

The National Model for Regional Working was co-constructed with key stakeholders (local authority leaders and chief officers, consortia, Estyn and head teachers) and sets out the parameters for regional consortia operation. It was always the intention to review the model and to refine it as regional consortia developed. The intention was that the National Model for Regional Working would act as a flexible framework within which consortia would operate and not a prescriptive set of instructions. It was signed-off by all 22 council leaders and their respective cabinets.

A review of the model is already underway with key stakeholders. This will provide further clarity on structures, roles and responsibilities. Robert Hill, who led on the development of the National Model for Regional Working, has been commissioned to lead this exercise which will result in some refinements to the model, in order to ensure clarity for all stakeholders. Our intention is that a refreshed model will be published by September 2015. It is also proposed that after the refinements have been agreed, a communications plan will be put in place so that all stakeholders are fully aware of the division of responsibilities.

### **Partly accept point four**

We think that this this needs further exploring with the WAO as there may be misinterpretation of the arrangements that are in place.

Whilst retaining the statutory responsibility for education improvement, local authorities no longer directly provide school improvement services as single authorities. This is in line with the National Model and underpinned by the Department's overarching strategy "Qualified for Life". Three regions have decided to deliver school improvement services jointly through a consortium arrangement and one has decided to commission directly from a company (the Education Achievement Service). We are content with this approach and believe that local authorities are best placed to determine their own delivery arrangements. However we do agree that these arrangements need to be clarified and this will be reflected in the redrafted National Model for Regional Working.

## **Recommendation Two - To focus on outcomes through medium term planning.**

WAO found that the development of effective regional consortia was hindered by a focus on short-term actions and uncertainty about the future of consortia. WAO therefore recommend:

- As any possible local authority re-organisation will not be fully implemented until 2020, the Welsh Government and regional consortia should develop three-year plans for the further development, scope, and funding of regional consortia linked to appropriate strategic objectives

### **Accept**

Working with local authorities, consortia and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) we have this year streamlined consortia business plans into headline business plans which address specified key priorities. These high level plans are underpinned by more detailed plans used by each region to inform performance management and work-streams. This year's headline plans for discussion with Welsh Government officials included 3 year milestones, so that the direction of travel for each work-stream could be shown.

We intend to move to a three year planning cycle and discussions have already taken place with key stakeholders. This approach will support the development of longer term outcome based targets and improved planning. In addition we intend to continue with our programme of rationalising grants so as to ensure that the Education Improvement Grant is firmly focused on strategic outcomes. The intention is to reduce the administrative burden and move to more outcome focussed targets. We will agree the detail by October 2015 and ensure it is fully operational for start of the 2016 financial year. The introduction of a three year planning cycle will follow the same timescale.

## **Recommendation three - To develop more collaborative relationships for the school improvement system.**

The development of the National Model for Regional Working involved many school improvement partners but we found that this had not led to the development of sufficiently collaborative relationships. WAO therefore recommend:

- The Welsh Government should develop the present 'Review and Challenge' approach (where the Welsh Government hold regional consortia to account) to a more collaborative but robust comprehensive 'system review' approach in which all partners in the system share progress, challenges and issues openly.
- Regional consortia should develop improved arrangements for sharing practice and supporting efficiency (for example, one consortium could take the lead on tackling an issue or have functional responsibility for the development of a policy).
- The Welsh Government, local authorities and regional consortia should recognise the interdependency of all partners fulfilling their school improvement roles and agree an approach to:

- information sharing and consultation about developments related to school improvement;
- developing collaborative relationships of shared accountability;
- undertaking system wide reviews, and an alignment of the understanding and position of regional consortia across all Welsh Government relevant strategies

## **Accept**

Since the WAO and Estyn commenced their fieldwork, the termly review and challenge sessions between Welsh Government and consortia have been reformed into an integrated cycle of reviews with clearly set aims and objectives. This has strengthened the focus of each session. We will undertake a fundamental review of the current process following the Autumn Ministerial sessions in October.

A number of joint good practice seminars have been delivered across Wales, the most recent being in North Wales coordinated by GwE but supported by and actively involving representatives from all four consortia.

The four consortia have jointly committed to facilitate a two day sharing good practice workshop to be held in September 2015. Attendance will include the full senior leadership team and second tier leaders from all four consortia. This will generate an opportunity not only to share good practice but to jointly highlight and tackle 'All Wales' issues with each consortium agreeing to lead nationally on named issues and priorities, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication across the other three. Increasingly the strategic leads for different aspects of work in each region are liaising with each other to share plans and ensure greater consistency.

The four consortia successfully submitted a joint bid to Welsh Government to provide the lead on the moderation of Key Stage assessment in Wales. That work is underway and has deepened the level of collaboration across Wales, and will grow over the coming year.

In addition, as part of the New Deal for the Education Workforce, Welsh Government is working in collaboration with the second tier leaders from each region to ensure that there is high quality provision for professional learning across Wales. This will include facilitating partnership working between the regions to share and develop provision; and agreeing the professional learning areas that each region will lead on.

Welsh Government Officials will ensure that policy teams develop their policies in a collaborative manner, engaging with consortia, ADEW and the diocesan authorities, starting in September 2015.

Welsh Government officials will support the regional consortia to develop a peer review system to encourage cross consortia working at all levels and expect this to be in place by April 2016. The teacher assessment moderation programme currently being led by the consortia is providing a firm foundation for this.

We will continue to work with Estyn as they develop their framework for consortia inspection to ensure that there is a clear focus on collaborative working amongst the four consortia

We will continue to develop with consortia school-to-school working and explore ways on how we can accelerate the federation of schools.

#### **Recommendation four - To build effective leadership and attract top talent.**

Regional consortia, local authorities and the Welsh Government have all found difficulties in recruiting to senior leadership for education and we found there had been limited action to address this. WAO therefore recommend:

- The Welsh Government should work with local authority leaders to improve capacity and capability in the system to support strategic development and effective governance.
- The Welsh Government and local authorities should collaborate to improve the attractiveness of education leadership roles to attract the most talented leaders for the school improvement system.
- Local authorities should collaborate to support the professional development of senior leaders and to ensure appropriate performance management arrangements are in place for senior leaders.

#### **Accept**

The WLGA, working with the Virtual Staff College, has developed a leadership programme for education directors in Wales. The programme is aimed initially at current serving directors with a view to further develop this for future and aspiring education directors.

The first programme takes place in Autumn 2015 and will cover theoretical leadership thinking with practical examples from Wales and England. All 22 Directors of Education will be in attendance

Through the New Deal for the Education Workforce, the Welsh Government is developing a new leadership development strategy for Wales. This will include early identification of potential leaders and strategies for development from early career in schools, up to and through headship and into wider system leadership. It will also include strands on attracting, sharing and retaining talented individuals to work in Wales.

Developing leaders for the entire system in Wales is a clear priority. The strategy will be co-designed and implemented in collaboration with leading practitioners, Consortia, local authorities and WLGA to ensure shared ownership and commitment. Additionally, the four regions will explore ways to ensure that the top talent in the school, and local authority workforce, is attracted to the most senior posts in the regions.

#### **Recommendation five - To improve the effectiveness of governance and management of regional consortia.**

Whilst continuing progress is being made, WAO found that regional consortia have not yet developed fully effective governance and financial management arrangements. WAO therefore recommend that local authorities and their regional consortia should:

- improve their use of self-evaluation of their performance and governance arrangements and use this to support business planning and their annual reviews of governance to inform their annual governance statements;
- improve performance management including better business planning, use of clear and measurable performance measures, and the assessment of value for money;
- make strategic risk management an integral part of their management arrangements and report regularly at joint committee or board level;
- develop their financial management arrangements to ensure that budgeting, financial monitoring and reporting cover all relevant income and expenditure, including grants funding spent through local authorities;
- develop joint scrutiny arrangements of the overall consortia as well as scrutiny of performance by individual authorities, which may involve establishment of a joint scrutiny committee or coordinated work by local authority scrutiny committees;
- ensure the openness and transparency of consortia decision making and arrangements;
- recognise and address any potential conflicts of interest; and where staff have more than one employer, regional consortia should ensure lines of accountability are clear and all staff are aware of the roles undertaken; and develop robust communications strategies for engagement with all key stakeholders.

### **Accept**

Whilst refining the National Model for Regional Working, we will work with and support consortia and local authorities to further strengthen their governance arrangements. Welsh Government officials are undertaking some additional scoping work in relation to the scrutiny function. We believe that each local authority is accountable for providing assurance to its elected members and will therefore have its own scrutiny arrangements. We will however work with WLGA to support consortia and local authorities to further strengthen this area and ensure that mechanisms are developed to share innovative and best practice. Regions are already ensuring that each authority's lead members for the scrutiny function are liaising with each other to ensure best practice, and further work is already underway to share scrutiny information. All consortia are in the process of strengthening scrutiny arrangements and we expect this to be embedded by December 2015. This work will also include a consistent approach in relation to value for money for the services being delivered and the outcomes being achieved. This has been a feature of the recently completed challenge and review sessions.

Welsh Government officials are encouraging and supporting consortia and local authorities to share good practice in relation to self-evaluation processes, target setting, performance management and to further develop clear and robust financial management arrangements. An all Wales good practice event and work-shop will be facilitated by Welsh Government with the intention that strengthened arrangements will be adopted by all 22 local authorities and the consortia in preparation for the start of the financial year in 2016.

Increasingly there are specialists working across more than one consortium, and in some cases those individuals also provide support for local authorities. Clear lines of

accountability have been developed, and the strong emphasis on the performance management of Challenge Advisers together with a consistent national approach to the moderation of their work, should ensure that conflicts of interests, such as those identified in the WAO report, are more effectively managed in future.

### **Monitoring Progress and Impact**

Our challenge and review sessions with each consortium will continue to monitor the progress of these recommendations along with the impact on educational outcomes across the system. This will also be embedded within the consortia new three-year business planning cycle



2 September 2015

Sarah Bartlett  
Deputy Clerk  
Policy and Legislation Committee Service  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff

CF99 1NA

Dear Sarah,

**Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPEC) request for information relating to the Estyn and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) early reviews of the role and effectiveness of the regional consortia prior to evidence sessions with each of the regional consortia and the Minister for Education and Skills**

Thank you for the invitation to provide input on issues relating to these early reviews prior to the evidence sessions.

The NASUWT notes that both reviews reflect many of the concerns which have been highlighted by our members and lay activists, as well as paid officials, over the lack of transparency, clarity and consistency that surrounds the role of the regional consortia, especially but not exclusively, in providing support to schools.

The NASUWT does not intend to repeat here those same concerns but will instead take the opportunity to draw to the attention of the CYPEC some fundamental shortcomings in both the Estyn and WAO reviews, and to suggest topics that could form the basis of questions which could be put to the consortia and the Minister during the evidence sessions. Indeed, the NASUWT believes that it may be appropriate for the CYPEC to hold an evidence session with both Estyn and the WAO in relation to their reviews.

## **Fundamental shortcomings in the reviews**

### **Estyn**

1. Although the Estyn review presents some key finding in relation to the role and effectiveness of the regional consortia, the NASUWT notes that there is no acknowledgement that the way in which the Inspectorate judged local authorities and schools changed after the Welsh Government created an artificial crisis over the provision of education in Wales, following the publication of the 2009 PISA results in December 2010.

The NASUWT remains of the view that the Welsh Government seized on the PISA results to shift the education agenda away from the years of underinvestment, as evidenced by the per pupil funding gap when compared to England, to underachievement.

Regrettably, this led to the denigration of local authorities, schools, teachers and pupils alike, with no political party at the Senedd prepared to speak up for schools and local authority services, and the body charged with the responsibility to bring a degree of independence to the debate, Estyn, producing a series of reports that appeared to be precursors to support Ministerial announcements on new initiatives for school improvement, including the 'National Model for Regional Working'.

The NASUWT believes it would be interesting to compare the bar chart produced at figure one of the review with a similar chart showing the Estyn judgements in relation to the provision for school improvement in each of the local authorities during the last inspection prior to September 2010, as the NASUWT has argued consistently that the Welsh Inspectorate compromised its independence following the panic over PISA to protect itself from blame and to support the view that it was local authorities and schools that were at fault.

It may be of interest to the CYPEC to note that in 2008 Estyn judged Pembrokeshire's support for school improvement to be at grade 2 (good features and no important shortcomings) with the prospects for improvement at grade 1 (improvement prospects are good, with significant improvements already in place), whereas the 2011 report deemed Pembrokeshire to be unsatisfactory in both categories.

2. The NASUWT questions seriously the claim at paragraph 7 of the 'Main findings' of the Estyn review that the regional consortia have engaged effectively with trade union in developing regional priorities and policies for school improvement. The NASUWT has no recollection of being contacted by the Welsh Inspectorate on this matter and, apart from the ERW consortium, engagement with the consortia on such matters has been irregular, inconsistent and usually at the request or insistence of the NASUWT.

Further, although it is acknowledged that the ERW consortium has set up a regular pattern of meeting with the trade unions representing the school-based workforce, very little positive progress had been made. The meetings have often become extremely acrimonious because of the consortium's attempts to usurp the role of the local authorities as the employers of the school-based workforce and a failure to respect the national positions of the trade unions representing the workforce, including the action short of strike action instructions that currently apply to both NASUWT and NUT members.

The latter point, in relation to the failure to respect the national action instructions issued to members of the NASUWT and NUT in furtherance of the on-going disputes with the Westminster and Wales governments, is not

only a cause for concern within the ERW consortium, it applies across the consortia and to School Challenge Cymru (SCC).

Indeed, it is noticeable that as well as failing to acknowledge the action that teachers have been taking since 2011 to protect themselves from adverse management practices, increasing workload and job loss, in the 'Background' to the Estyn review, it is suggested, at paragraph 60, that challenge advisers have a right to observe lessons on a judgemental rather than developmental basis. This demonstrates Estyn has no regard for, or understanding of, the protocol on lesson observation agreed with the Welsh Government.

3. Although it is noted in the review at paragraphs 40 to 41 that all challenge advisers are expected to successfully complete training in inspection skills with Estyn and subsequently join an Estyn inspection as a team inspector at least once per year, the report does not identify how many challenge advisers also work as inspectors for Estyn on more than one occasion per year.

The NASUWT maintains that this is an important issue that should not have been overlooked by Estyn, especially when viewed in the context of the criticism of school improvement officers and former members of school advisory services, many of whom were also Estyn inspectors, contained in paragraph 40 of the review, and the concerns over managing conflicts of interest and the integrity of consortia work being undermined, identified in the WAO review.

4. The NASUWT is appalled at the observation made by Estyn at paragraph 69 of the review as this appears to imply that teachers should use their own time to access, or even provide as secondees, training and development activities in relation to school improvement.

The fact that the review questions the use of school-to-school support on the basis that this could lead to a greater use of supply cover for teachers demonstrates a lack of vision on the part of Estyn in considering how such activity could be organised through the coordinated use of in-service training days.

The NASUWT maintains that it would have been far more constructive if the review had recommended strategies that the consortia could consider to ensure that the use of secondments and school-to-school support did not necessitate the use of supply teachers or impact adversely on teachers' time outside the normal working day, rather than continuing to cast doubt on the valuable contribution provided by supply teachers.

5. In agreeing with the overall finding at paragraph 14 of the Estyn review that regional consortia are better at challenging schools about their current performance than supporting them to improve, the NASUWT notes that the Inspectorate recognises rightly at paragraph 76 that the consortia provide little support for schools in relation to non-core subjects but fails to acknowledge that the concentration on improving literacy and numeracy has contributed to the demise of non-core subjects, as evidenced by the recent drop in GCSE

entrants, and that the situation has been exacerbated by the focus on literacy and numeracy within the inspection framework.

Further, the NASUWT maintains that the recommendation that the consortia should provide or broker better support for teaching and learning in non-core subjects presents an admission that access to subject specialist school advisory services is vital to assisting teachers in their work, an approach that Robert Hill set his face against in 2013.

6. The Estyn review appears to miss the point entirely over the Welsh Government's SCC programme. The review concentrates on the numbers of schools in the programme and questions how the two consortia with the higher number of secondary school in the programme will be able to evaluate and distinguish their work in terms of school improvement from the support provided by SCC.

The NASUWT would have expected Estyn to have acknowledged that the £20 million provided for this initiative was a clear recognition that funding and group or class size makes a difference.

## WAO

7. As with the Estyn review, the WAO has failed to acknowledge that the Regional Consortia were established on the basis of an artificial crisis created by the Welsh Government following the publication of the 2009 PISA outcomes in December 2010. Indeed, it is noticeable that the WAO review highlights that only one local authority was judged as excellent by the Inspectorate during the 2010-13 inspection cycle, but fails to consider the previous Estyn judgements for each of the local authorities.

This omission presents a failure to test the integrity and/or credibility of the judgements made by the Inspectorate during the 2010-13 inspection cycle.

8. Although the WAO review identifies the total core funding for the Regional Consortia for 2014-15, presents details of the reduction in local authority school improvement expenditure between 2008-9 and 2013-14 and details grant funding provided by the Welsh Government relating to the school improvement, no details of the total expenditure, including the core funding, over which the consortia now has control has been provided.

The NASUWT maintains that it would have been reasonable to have expected the WAO review to have provided such information on a collective consortia and individual consortium basis, not least, since the school-based workforce has faced unprecedented levels of job losses in 2014-15.

9. As with the Estyn review, the WAO rightly raises concerns over the introduction of the SCC programme and the role of the consortia in relation to schools in the programme but missed the fundamental point that allocating £20 million for 40 schools is a clear admission that additional funding is vital to assisting schools to improve pupil outcomes.

10. The NASUWT is alarmed by the reference, at paragraph 3.6 of the WAO review, to the activities of the ERW consortium in relation to addressing perceived inconsistencies in the provision of specialist human resources support to schools, as it presents a positive picture of ERW's work in this area.

In fact, the activities of ERW in this area have been an unmitigated disaster. The NASUWT and NUT have been placed in the position of having to escalate national action to strike action in schools that were being forced to adopt an ERW pay policy that was unacceptable because it sought to provide a means for the suppression of teachers' pay and, regrettably, a similar situation is now arising over the consortium's meddling with the performance management arrangements for teachers.

The NASUWT questions seriously the credibility of the evidence on which the WAO relied over the activities of ERW in relation to the discussions with the trade unions representing the school workforce on employment-related matters.

#### **Possible topics for questions for the evidence sessions**


In light of the shortcomings identified in the reviews, the NASUWT asks the CYPEC to consider raising the questions based on those that follow with the consortia and/or the Minister.

- A. If the consortia were to be categorised using Estyn grades and the school categorisation colour-coding system of green, yellow, amber and red, what category would each consortium be placed in?
- B. What processes have each consortium put in place to handle complaints from service users, including individual members of the school workforce?
- C. What structures have each consortium put in place to engage regularly with the trade unions representing the school-based workforce over their approaches to the provision of school improvement services?
- D. How much transparency is there over the total amount of education funding that now comes under the control of each consortium?
- E. How is the work of the challenge advisers monitored and assessed?
- F. How many challenge advisers regularly undertake work for the inspectorate and/or for local authorities?
- G. What plans does the Minister, and each consortium, have to phase out the role of challenge advisers as schools develop their self-evaluation practice, partnership and joint working approaches?

- H. Does the Minister, and each consortium, recognise that the employer functions for the school-based workforce remain with the twenty-two local authorities and that the consortia cannot be considered to be negotiating bodies in terms of employment matters.
- I. What efforts have been made by each consortium to adhere to the Welsh Government guidance *Classroom observation – purpose and protocols*?
- J. Has each consortium considered the demands being place on teachers to raise levels of attainment across all phases of education against the contractual rights and entitlements of teachers and other school-based practitioners?
- K. What assessment, including the SCC schools, has been made of the additional teaching provided outside the normal school day and/or outside the time-tabled teaching week in order to improve pupil outcomes?
- L. Has each consortium considered whether the pressure that the drive to ensure pupils are PISA and GCSE A\* to C grade ready could be having a negative effect on pupils' desire for, and joy of, learning?

The NASUWT recognises that this response exceeds the limit of four pages of A4 but seeks the indulgence of the CYPEC.

Yours sincerely,



Rex Phillips

NASUWT National Official for Wales



## **Catholic Education Service response to CYPEC on Regional Education Consortia**

### **Executive summary**

- The evidence is being submitted by the Catholic Education Service (CES) on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- We welcome both the Estyn and Welsh Audit reports and their recognition of the significant and formal role of dioceses in the education sector in Wales.
- In our response we have recommended ways to improve the partnership between Diocesan Authorities with Welsh Government, Regional Consortia, and Local Authorities.

### **Introduction**

1. The Catholic Education Service is the national representative of all the Catholic schools in Wales. We work closely with the three Catholic dioceses in Wales; Archdiocese of Cardiff, Diocese of Wrexham and Diocese of Menevia, as well as with our colleagues in the Church in Wales.
2. There are 89 Catholic schools in Wales educating 29,755 pupils and employing nearly 3000 teachers and education support staff.
3. The Welsh Government's *Faith in Education* (2011) acknowledges and celebrates the place of schools with a religious character in Wales. The Bishops of Wales, working through their Diocesan Officers, are committed to building partnership-working on the foundation stones of that document.
4. Currently Diocesan Directors of Education work closely with local authorities and regional consortia to ensure the continued delivery of Catholic education.

### **Response to the Estyn and Welsh Audit reports**

5. We welcome the findings of both the Estyn and Welsh Audit reports regarding the Regional Education Consortia and in particular the statement made in para. 2.8 of the Welsh Audit Office Report, *Achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia – an early view*, that Diocesan Directors of Education have a 'significant and formal role in education in Wales' (para. 2.8).
6. We also welcome the Recommendations of the Estyn Report, *Improving schools through regional education consortia*, that Regional Consortia should 'Involve diocesan authorities effectively in the strategic planning and evaluation of regional services' (R5) and that the Welsh Government should 'Engage more effectively with diocesan authorities in developing its strategy for school improvement' (R 12) and 'Ensure that consortia, local authorities and diocesan authorities are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities for schools in the Schools Challenge Cymru programme' (R 13).
7. We are disappointed that Recommendation 3 of the Welsh Audit Office Report did not refer to Diocesan Authorities specifically, given the reference in para. 2.8 to the formal nature of their authority.

### **The legislative difference of schools with a religious character**

8. We are concerned that to date consortia have been set up without appropriate consideration of their legal basis. Clearly in Wales diocesan representatives must be appointed onto overview and scrutiny committees appointed by a local authority for the purposes of discharging the authority's functions with respect to education. Whilst this may have been reflected in some of the consortia arrangements, we are concerned that the appropriate oversight is not reflected across the board in the governance arrangements of national consortia which are carrying out education functions on behalf of local authorities. It is essential that, going forward, all regional consortia include appropriate diocesan representation, or the relevant oversight and scrutiny is carried out at a local authority level.
9. We are of the view that there is a lack of clarity about the interaction between the role and responsibility of the local authority and the role and responsibility of the consortia. The issues of development of the regional consortia need to be urgently addressed and this needs to be done in full consultation and liaison with representatives of the Churches, including the Catholic Education Service and Diocesan Authorities.
10. As both reports make clear, there are examples of situations where the Welsh Government, Regional Consortia and Local Authorities have failed to understand the legislative basis on which the Catholic Church and the Church in Wales own and manage schools with a religious character on behalf of the nation of Wales. Our evidence demonstrates that the working partnerships at all levels have, at best, been patchy, though both reports mention occasional good practice.
11. It is our view that, in general, the Catholic sector has been unable to influence thinking and policy; that its interests as providers of schools with a religious character have not been addressed and that on occasion this has led to inequitable treatment, for example, in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools plans.

### **Recommendations**

12. To improve the partnership between Diocesan Authorities and Welsh Government, Regional Consortia, and Local Authorities in the future we suggest the following four recommendations:
  - 1: The Welsh Government to engage with Diocesan Authorities at the earliest stages of educational policy change and development, for example, Diocesan Officers to be represented on all key Welsh Government fora and working groups.
  - 2: A formal protocol to be adopted by all Regional Consortia outlining the partnership between the Consortia/Local Authorities and Diocesan Authorities.
  - 3: Within that protocol, Regional Consortia to ensure at least one senior officer has responsibility for partnership working with Diocesan Officers.
  - 4: Within that protocol, Regional Consortia to ensure Diocesan Authority representation, as appropriate, on Regional Consortia governance bodies, for example, Joint Committees or Company Boards

### **Conclusion**

13. We welcome the opportunity your deliberations are providing to help build more effective partnerships between the Diocesan Authorities and Welsh Government, Regional Consortia, and Local Authorities.

14. This improvement in partnership working will no doubt have a significant impact on the work of schools with a religious character in Wales both in terms of the education of children and young people in Wales and the greater good of Welsh society.

**Catholic Education Service**  
**02.09.2015**



## *Promoting and developing high quality school governance*

### **Children, Young People and Education Committee**

#### **Work of the Regional Education Consortia / Findings from the Reports**

Governors Wales offers the following comments received from governors associations and Board members, based upon the recommendations and findings in the two reports, in addition to some generic comments:

Notwithstanding the National Model for Regional Working<sup>1</sup>, in practice there is still a lack of clarity on the respective roles of consortia and local authorities in relation to school improvement and, in particular, in relation to the support that needs to be provided for schools which are underperforming. The Wales Audit Office recommendation that there is a need to clarify the nature and operation of consortia is therefore welcomed; in particular the third bullet point on the need for the Welsh Government and local authorities to *develop and agree a consistent approach to the role of regional consortia and the Welsh Government in school improvement interventions so that all parties are clear what they should be involved in and responsible for*.

In relation to governors, the proposal in the National Model for Regional Working that each consortium should establish a panel to consult with school governors does not appear to have been implemented in all regional consortia areas and this needs to be acted upon as soon as possible. Equally there is a need for governor representation in the governance structure.

The main finding in the Estyn Report concerning the fact that consortia business plans do not identify the impact expected from their actions and the fact that none of the consortia has a medium-term plan in place to guide a strategic approach to school improvement is particularly pertinent. Welsh Government, the consortia and local authorities should act accordingly.

The recommendations to the regional consortia, local authorities and the Welsh Government in the Estyn report are all appropriate and need to be taken forward. The main findings in the Estyn report also note that there is insufficient involvement of challenge advisers in the moderation of teacher assessment in the schools in the consortia: the role of the consortia and challenge advisers in standardisation and moderation of teacher assessment needs to be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/national-model-for-regional-working/?lang=en>

Some general points below are noted:

- The need for consortia to be more robust so that Estyn Inspection findings on schools are not out of line with the Consortium's pre-inspection assessment.
- Some have raised that there is a tendency for consortia to go too far in trying to impose uniform systems on schools.
- There appeared to be a high turnover of staff in the first two years of the establishment of consortia, which caused some disruption and additional work for schools. This now appears to have settled down, with stability and consistency being provided. Positive feedback has been received on the role of the Challenge Advisers.
- Experience so far suggests that where consortia have incorporated governor support services, this is beneficial as it recognises that governors are part of the school improvement dimension. This has led, for example to a more rounded governor training programme, and the opportunity to attend courses in adjacent Local Authority areas.
- Schools Challenge Cymru Advisers are employed by Welsh Government and not by the consortia which can potentially create communication problems for participating secondary schools.
- Where the consortia convene termly meetings (or as appropriate) with the Chairs of the Local Governor Associations in the area, these meetings have been very constructive and useful.
- Equally where consortia arrange conferences with headteachers, chairs of governors, challenge advisers and Local Authority members, these are particularly useful for governors.

# Agenda Item 3

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales  
Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education  
Committee

CYPE(4)-21-15 - Papur | Paper 2

Ymateb gan : Gwasanaeth Addysg ar y Cyd Consortiwm Canolbarth y De  
Response from : Central South Consortium Joint Education Service

**Report on the Central South consortium response to the Welsh Audit Office / Estyn remit review of Consortia, published in June 2015.**

## **Background**

Estyn and the Welsh Audit Office undertook fieldwork together in October 14 to January 15 to review the progress of the implementation of regional consortia working since 2012.

The WAO were looking particularly at the effectiveness of governance arrangements. Estyn were reporting on the progress being made by consortia to provide school improvement services. Estyn were also keen to use the process to develop a framework through which consortia could be inspected. The framework is due in September 2015 and inspections of all four regional consortia will follow in the Spring/Summer of 2016.

## **Central South Consortium's response to the findings**

The five authorities and Consortium in Central South Wales welcome the findings of both reports and the contribution that Estyn and the Welsh Audit Office are making to supporting improvement in the region.

## **History of the Consortium**

The Central South region is the most populous region of Wales with a third of the children in Wales served by 406 schools across the five authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. The region also represents a third of the most deprived communities in Wales and increasing diversity with more communities without English or Welsh as a first language.

The Central South Consortium was established at pace by the five local authorities in the region in September 2012. It was established very quickly and struggled to gain the confidence of schools and authorities in the early days.

In 2013 the five authorities commissioned a review of the consortium's effectiveness which resulted in some significant restructuring, a review of governance, the appointment of a permanent leadership team and the launch of a new strategic direction for the region: 'The Central South Wales Challenge': leading a self improving school system led by Professor Mel Ainscow.

The Consortium receives £4.4m annual revenue funding from the five authorities which is (according to the WAO) approximately 1% of education spending in the region. This has remained the same since 2012 and is below the recommended level of funding which the Consortium should receive as proposed by the Welsh Government. A key focus of our work is delivering value for money and increased efficiency in our work in the region.

## **Central South Wales Challenge**

In January 2014 the Central South Wales Challenge strategy group launched the 'Challenge' to all heads in the region. The approach is based on the evidence of what works in high performing school systems. This means our aims are that:

- schools are communities where teachers work together to improve teaching practice;
- groups of schools engage in joint practice development;
- more intensive partnerships provide support for schools facing difficulties;
- families and community organisations support the work of schools;
- coordination of the system is provided by school leaders; and
- local authorities work together to act as the conscience of the system.

The strategy is coordinated by a strategy group made up of headteachers from the region. The work includes a number of strands of work which include putting all schools in the region into groups (School Improvement groups or SIGs) to learn from each other. The approach also involves brokering 'pathfinder' partnerships between schools which can learn from each other, investing in 'hub' schools which are schools with strong teaching and learning systems as a resource for all schools across the region and brokering 'peer reviews' of schools by schools to build effective self-evaluation leading to improvement.

### **Working together with evidence based intervention**

An area of focus in Central South has been a consistent, evidence-based approach to the way that we challenge and support schools. Consortia are able to both recruit and develop a stronger workforce than individual local authorities, work together to harness the best practice in the region for the whole region and evaluate effective interventions together. The partnership of five authorities and consortia in Central South has been working hard to learn from what has worked in a number of areas, including in attendance strategies, governor services and in consistent high quality intervention processes where progress in schools has been unsatisfactory.

We have also reviewed the role and appointments of challenge advisers. The challenge adviser role is about working with governors and schools' leaders to challenge and support their capacity to be self-improving. The approach is much more about working in partnership with schools rather than "doing to" schools. We have reviewed our challenge adviser team to ensure that we have very experienced staff working with schools, the majority of whom are or have been recently, successful senior leaders in schools. We will continue to intervene rigorously and robustly in schools where improvement has been insufficient. Whilst we are growing a school led system we do also provide direct support to vulnerable schools in core subjects and we are working more closely to support effective governance and Human Resources services to schools seeking to delegate as much resource to schools as possible so that it can be put to effective use.

### **Results in the region**

The Wales Audit Office (WAO) and Estyn reports published in June questioned the impact of the Consortia partnerships. The results in 2015 in the Central South Consortium demonstrate that by working together schools, authorities and consortia, schools across the Central South region are now showing real and sustained progress since 2012.

In particular:

- In 2011 the region was one of the worst performing regions in Wales but now sits above the national average at foundation phase, key stage 2 and 4 in many indicators.

- At key stage 2, the number of pupils aged between 7 and 11 years old, achieving their expected target has increased by 2 percentage points from 85.8% to 87.8% in 2015, up from 80.9 in 2012. This compares to a national increase of 1.6 percentage points and a national average of 87.7%.
- At key stage 3 pupils aged between 11 and 14 years olds have seen a significant rise of 3.3 percentage points in 2015 from 80.3% in 2014 to 83.6%, up from 70.2% in 2012. This is against a national average of 2.9 percentage points improvement taking the national figure to 83.9%.
- Key stage four results in the region in 2014 at the Level 2+ measure (5 GCSE passes at grades A\* - C including English/Welsh and mathematics) saw the fastest improvement nationally rising by just under 5 percentage points. Provisional results in the region in 2015 are once again very promising – data to be published in the autumn;
- The gap between the achievement of children claiming free school meals and their peers has narrowed again at every key stage.

In inspection too, the region is showing improvement with more schools demonstrating good or better performance and receiving a good or excellent judgement on standards compared to 2011/12. Inspection of local authorities, in particular in RCT and Bridgend, have demonstrated the added value consortia working has brought where both authorities were removed from Estyn monitoring in the last year.

### Areas for improvement

Following the fieldwork by Estyn and WAO in the Central South region in November 14, a number of recommendations were made. These recognised positive progress in CSC in establishing strategy and vision, engagement and relationships, self evaluation, governance and financial management and improving challenge adviser credibility.

However, there were a number of areas where improvement is needed both in CSC and nationally which are reflected in the recommendations of the Estyn and WAO report. We have summarised these below:

1. **Governance and scrutiny.** The Central South Consortium operate as a partnership of the five authorities working together to generate improvement and efficiencies across the region. This can be demonstrated by the appointment of joint roles working across the authorities and consortium. We have revisited the job descriptions of these roles to make sure accountability is tight. We have also included the Diocese in our governance model. The consortium will report to every one of the local authorities' scrutiny committees in January each year. We will hold our Joint Committees in each authority and invite the Scrutiny committee to observe. We are bringing the Chairs of Scrutiny together to discuss progress and areas for improvement with the leadership team of the Consortium.
2. **Business planning, smarter operational planning and collaboration with other consortia.** We have a business plan with a three-year vision and will be modeling the next three years with indicative budgets. We have reviewed our operational planning making the review of progress and evaluation of impact smarter. We were noted for our honest self- evaluation, decision making, transparency and risk management but will improve links further between self-evaluation and business planning this year and continue to review risks regularly. We have led a conference in September of the four consortia to share practice and have a number of areas of joint work not least Challenge Adviser training delivered in partnership with EAS.

3. **Quality assurance and performance management.** This is always a priority. We have reviewed our framework for challenge advisers and will be providing additional training to tighten assessment of teaching and leadership and to strengthen evaluative writing to provide evidence about the impact of intervention when required. We have also reviewed our quality assurance approach across all of our work and strengthen our performance management system.
4. **Focus on reducing the gap and use of data.** Our new strategic lead for this area has developed our Closing the Gap strategy and guidance for schools. We will strengthen the use of data, including target setting by challenge advisers to highlight the progress of vulnerable groups. We have strengthened the accountability for improvement of these groups across schools particularly at risk of underperformance. We already use pupil level data in our work, and we will be developing a common pupil level database that will link schools' and pupils' performance data held in the region with the wider data in each local authority.
5. **Financial management.** Again Estyn and the WAO commented in feedback on good financial management in place in CSC. We will continue with a particular focus on demonstrating value for money across the region and in each authority.

### Areas for further work by Welsh Government

We would highlight a number of specific areas.

- **School funding.** The Welsh Government Department for Education needs to review how grant and revenue budgets are set, allocated and reviewed to ensure as much efficiency in the system as possible. The Minimum Funding Guarantee is welcome and needs to continue and be monitored across the country. In particular, a number of flexibilities in relation to the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) were announced last year which have yet to be realised in practice because of retained terms and conditions around predecessor grants. The Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) grant are both very significant levers focused at the most vulnerable whilst building sustainable capacity in the school system. They are crucial to ongoing levels of improvement, whilst continuing to focus on efficiency and value for money. Most immediately it would be helpful if work were done as early as possible this autumn to set grant budgets so that we can indicate funding levels to schools to plan for improvement work.
- **Strategic medium term planning.** We support the need for a consortia business planning model, ideally with a three-year timescale but are realistic about the uncertainties of the election and local government re-organisation. It would be helpful if some thought were given to the long term future of Consortia within this. The national accountability model can be made more efficient to enable regions to be more impactful.
- **Risk of distraction by new policies poorly implemented.** Consideration should be given to managing new national initiatives very carefully including that of the new qualification and curriculum changes in a way that least disrupts and builds on the progress nationally.
- **More freedoms and flexibilities for good schools.** In a tighter financial climate we need to enable our best schools to lead the way towards better models of school improvement. This means increased flexibilities to work together in challenging ways with other schools and fewer burdens. It would be helpful if there could be some strategic thinking about ways that increased freedoms could be earned by schools with strong leadership, a clear capacity to improve and a willingness to be suitably self reflective, so that resources are used in the most effective way across all regions.

Ann Jones AM  
Chair, Children and Young People and Education Committee

3 July 2015

Dear Ann,

### Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill

Further to my letter of 16 June 2015, I enclose a copy of the Health and Social Care Committee's Stage 1 report on the general principles of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill ("the Bill"). The report has been laid today, Friday 3 July 2015, and will be published on the [Committee's website](#).

After hearing evidence from a number of witnesses, the Committee has concluded that the general principles of the Bill should be agreed by the National Assembly for Wales. However, we believe that the Bill's provisions need to be strengthened in a number of areas, including workforce registration, the involvement and engagement of the public in the inspection regime, oversight of local authority commissioning functions, and arrangements for joint working and collaboration between relevant regulatory bodies and authorities.

Two of our recommendations may be of particular interest to your Committee. Recommendation 4 calls upon the Minister to bring forward amendments to require all those who exercise functions under the Bill to have due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (in addition to the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and the UN Principles for Older

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



Persons). Recommendation 39 calls upon the Minister for Health and Social Services to explore whether it would be appropriate to extend the requirement to register with Social Care Wales to foster carers.

A debate on the general principles of the Bill has been scheduled for Tuesday 14 July 2015.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David F. Rees." The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered on a light yellow rectangular background.

**David Rees AM**

Chair, Health and Social Care Committee



Ann Jones AM  
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay

3 July 2015

Dear 

**Petition P-04-628 To Improve Access to Education and Services in British Sign Language**

The Petitions Committee has been considering the following petition from DEFFO, which has collected 1,162 signatures.

*We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language to improve the quality of life for Deaf people of all ages.*

*Improve Access for families to learn BSL: When a child is diagnosed as being Deaf/hard of hearing parents should be offered free/subsidised BSL lessons (BSL level one costs approximately £300 per person). By using speech alone, Deaf children struggle/fail to develop communication skills missing important milestones. Learning other languages through BSL (English/Welsh) will improve the child's understanding and comprehension.*

*Introduce BSL on the National Curriculum: Deaf Children and young people who are taught BSL at an early age will have better access to their education and an improved wellbeing. BSL should be available in schools and taught by qualified Deaf teachers, for all to learn as this would achieve better access for all in society. We believe that BSL should be offered as a language for all learners as a qualification. GCSE Welsh (and other modern languages) are not always offered to Deaf students: this also needs to be improved.*





*Improving access to Education in BSL for Deaf Children and Young People: currently they have limited access to Education in BSL, and often experience under qualified support. There is a massive gap in the education of Deaf children, as many are wrongly treated as having a Learning Disability. This has a negative impact on their development in life, reducing independence with poor education, resulting in under-employment. They need adequately qualified Communication Support Workers available in school.*

*Making Services and resources accessible in BSL for Deaf young people: enabling BSL users to access information in their preferred language via digital resources to services such as Education, Health care, Social Services and public transport, giving them equality to access as an equivalent to Welsh Language access.*

At our meeting on 2 June, the Committee agreed to draw the petition to the attention of the Children, Young People and Education Committee and, assuming it is referred to your Committee, to ask that DEFFO is included in any consultation on the forthcoming Bill on additional learning needs. However I recognise that in the intervening period, the Minister has announced his intention to consult on a draft Bill, with a view to introducing a Bill early in the new Assembly Term. Given that, should the Committee be considering undertaking any pre legislative work in this area, I would be grateful if you could bear the DEFFO petitioners in mind.

Further information on the Petitions Committee's consideration of the petition is available at:

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=12394&Opt=3>

I would be grateful if you could forward any response to the Committee's Clerking team at [SeneddPetitions@Assembly.Wales](mailto:SeneddPetitions@Assembly.Wales)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William".

William Powell AC/AM  
Cadeirydd/ Chair

Huw Lewis AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

9 July 2015

Dear Ann,

Many thanks for your letter dated 2 July 2015 and for the feedback the Committee has provided on the guidance document, *Effective management of workforce attendance*.

Whilst I have thought very carefully about the Committee's comments, it is still my intention to publish the *Effective management of workforce attendance* prior to the end of the summer term. This is so that all key stakeholders can use the guidance to inform their policies and practices for the beginning of the academic year.

I want to reassure members of the Committee that this document was co-constructed with the support of Newport City Council. I can also assure the Committee that my officials have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, who have provided both oral and written feedback. Additionally, my officials have held meetings with practitioners, local authorities, union representatives and the Wales Audit Office to inform the guidance. Both Estyn and the Wales Audit Office have seen the draft that you received and provided some further feedback which has subsequently been incorporated and neither organisation raised any issues of significant concern. In fact, Estyn's opening comment in their feedback was "Overall, this is a clear document which covers the wide spectrum of circumstances in relation to teacher absence."

This document was always intended to be a 'living document' that will evolve with the changing requirements of the educational environment and given our extensive engagement I feel that the document reflects the current requirements of the education system in Wales. Also, as stated in my evidence to the Committee, the Welsh Government will be making a request to Estyn for a further thematic review to be undertaken in 2016/17, on cover arrangements and to assess the effectiveness of the guidance.

I will address each of your areas of concern in turn:

Collection and use of data

- Provides insufficient clarity and detail on what data would actually be collected;

The guidance clearly states who is responsible for collating, reporting and analysing data on sickness absence. The Welsh Government will continue to provide a data template to local authorities, for them to populate, which will be used to inform the publication of sickness absence data on a local authority level. By publishing the data at a local authority level, schools and local authorities will be required to ensure that the data submitted is accurate and meaningful. We will be working closely with local authorities in developing the data template to ensure that our requirements are practical and achievable.

- Does not meet the objectives of providing clarity with regard to teacher absence or eliminating the variations in the reporting of absence;

The publication of teacher sickness absence data by local authority on an annual basis will raise the profile and importance of ensuring that teacher sickness absence is reported accurately and appropriately at a school level. This information will be reported, via the local authority, to the Welsh Government. By having a more robust system of monitoring and reporting absence data at a school level, governors and consortia will be better informed to regularly monitor an individual school's performance.

- Does not provide enough detail on how the local authority regional consortia will monitor and interrogate the data;

It is the Welsh Government's responsibility to set the strategic direction for both local authorities and the regional consortia as such it would be inappropriate for the Welsh Government to be overly prescriptive on the detail of the day-to-day operations of the consortia who are responsible for school improvement services. The guidance complements the *National Model for Regional Working: Revitalising People Management* guidance and sets out the requirements for each consortium; it is an operational decision, based on the needs of the school, as to how they will monitor and interrogate the data.

- Is unclear on the type of information that the regional consortia's templates should include;

Regional consortia offer a school improvement service. As set out in the *National Model for Regional Working* their data templates will be developed in consultation with local authorities, school leaders and governors and these data templates will reflect the areas that require further monitoring for improvement in their schools. The *Effective management of workforce attendance* reiterates the *National Model for Regional Working* which provides a clear outline of the type of information that the regional consortia templates should include, including data on 'staff sickness absence'.

- Role for local authorities in monitoring schools' implementation of their attendance management policies; and role for local authorities or consortia in the oversight of schools' use of supply teachers;

As stated in the guidance, it is the school's responsibility as the employer, to ensure that there is an operational attendance management policy in place which is being deployed in an 'equitable, fair and confidential manner'. The Governing Body has the responsibility for ensuring that these policies are applied rigorously through regular monitoring and evaluating. The local authority will provide guidance, support and assistance in developing these policies; and are encouraged, through the guidance, to provide management

information for the school, governors, and consortia to inform Governing Body meetings and/ or Challenge and Review meetings.

Ultimately it is the duty of individual head teachers, working with their Governing Body and wider school team, to determine the best way to manage absences and provide cover in their schools – including the use of supply teachers. Local authorities utilise the National Procurement Service (NPS) for areas of common and repetitive spend and as customers of the NPS they identified supply teaching as such an item of expenditure. The role of local authorities in the oversight of schools' use of supply teachers is set out within the guidance. The guidance specifies (in the section on the roles and responsibilities of local authorities) a number of ways that they will meet this, including:

- Collate and benchmark absence data in schools;
- Evaluate a schools arrangements for managing supply cover, and;
- Review the framework contract to ensure value for money.

The guidance further reiterates this role in 'Effective management of the cost of absence' section by stating that local authorities should ensure that the preferred supplier, New Directions, is providing the quality of service (including an element of Continuous Professional Development and Performance Management) that they are contracted to provide. In addition, the Welsh Government, in conjunction with the NPS will be monitoring the national picture on a regular basis.

As stated above, I would like to reassure the Committee that this document will be a living document that will be developed further following its initial implementation, roll-out and with feedback from practitioners from every level of the education system.

I would, as ever, welcome a constructive dialogue with the Committee as the document is developed and look forward to receiving your comments.

Yours Sincerely



Huw Lewis AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills

# Agenda Item 4.4

Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref LF/HL/0676/15

Ann Jones AM  
Chair  
Children, Young People and Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

15 July 2015

Dear Ann,

## **Children, Young People and Education Committee – Update on the plans for commencement and Transitional Arrangements to Establish Qualifications Wales**

During Stage 2 consideration of the Qualifications Wales Bill by the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 30 April, I offered to provide Committee Members with further details on the transitional arrangements to establish Qualifications Wales as they progressed.

My officials will be writing shortly to Awarding Bodies informing them of the current intentions regarding transitional arrangements, which I consider are necessary or appropriate to provide continuity and stability. I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to provide an update to Committee Members on both these intended commencement and transitional arrangements.

### **Commencement and transitional arrangements**

My officials are working towards commencing the provisions of the Qualifications Wales Bill, in the following order:

- those which are brought about by Royal Assent – the Bill already makes provision for this (section 60(1));

- those which relate to the establishment of Qualifications Wales shortly after Royal Assent, in order that the necessary preparations can be made before it becomes fully operational; and
- those which, on 21 September 2015, will commence Qualifications Wales' regulatory functions. Monetary penalties regulations will be brought forward at a later date.

I have already appointed a Qualifications Wales Shadow Board and it is my current intention to appoint those members as the first Qualifications Wales Board once I am able to. My officials are working with those members to develop arrangements so that Qualifications Wales can make the necessary operational and regulatory decisions during its initial months.

It is also my current intention to appoint Philip Blaker, currently Chief Executive (Interim) as the first Chief Executive Officer of Qualifications Wales. Subsequent appointments will be made by Qualifications Wales itself.

Recruitment for staff is well underway, with offers having been made for 34 positions with a further 30 positions currently at interview stage. Ten positions are expected to be recruited later in the year to bring Qualifications Wales to its full head-count of 74. The headquarters has been leased and fitted out. The ICT infrastructure has been largely completed and ICT equipment purchased. Software has been purchased and is being configured, and the website is being developed ready for launch. Data records for copy or transfer are being identified and contracts have been set up for a number of the on-going services required by the new body.

My officials are working towards transitional arrangements including the following:

- An awarding body currently recognised by the Welsh Ministers would be treated as recognised generally by Qualifications Wales and awarding bodies would be given (in advance of commencement) the opportunity to identify any qualifications or descriptions of qualifications for which they do not wish to be generally recognised upon their recognition being transitioned to Qualifications Wales.
- Most qualifications that are listed as eligible for public funding on the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales (DAQW) immediately before 21 September 2015 are to be treated as designated by Qualifications Wales with effect from 21 September 2015 until the earlier of the review date shown on that database or 31 August 2018.
- The remaining few qualifications listed as eligible for public funding immediately before 21 September 2015 will be treated as approved with effect from 21 September 2015 until their review date as listed on the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales (DAQW). These are the key reformed, Wales only, qualifications - GCSEs, AS and A levels, Welsh Bacc and Essential Skills Wales
- Regulatory documents published by Welsh Government and applied, through conditions of recognition, to awarding bodies and their qualifications are to be treated as standard conditions of recognition under the Bill, with some minor amendments, for example to reflect the terminology of the Bill.

These arrangements allow for:

- continuity of protection for learners;
- continuity of regulation with regulatory activities currently being undertaken by the Welsh Government (including, for example, any investigations or reviews) able to be continued by Qualifications Wales;
- continuity of the provision of funded qualifications as listed on DAQW;

- Qualifications Wales to be able to operate, in the first instance - and broadly speaking - by utilising existing regulatory documents;
- a period in which the use of the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales logos on certificates to learners may be respectively phased out and in.

There is nothing in the current regulatory system which is closely analogous to the list of priority qualifications (section 13 of the Bill). The Welsh Ministers and Qualifications Wales will decide on the first list in due course. My officials will engage with Qualifications Wales on this matter once its regulatory functions are commenced.

I trust that this information is helpful to Committee Members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis'.

**Huw Lewis AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills

To: Committee Chairs

15 July 2015

Dear Committee Chair

In order to maintain the momentum generated by the Assembly's visit to Wrexham earlier this year, and building on the lessons we learned, I am eager to deliver another Senedd@ event in the autumn term in Swansea as it had the lowest turnout of all in the 2011 elections.

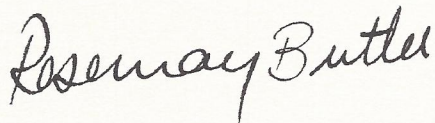
The week 12-18 October 2015 is ideal as it coincides with European Local Democracy Week and we are therefore planning activities to take place at that time.

One of the key findings of the Senedd@Wrexham evaluation was the need to enable committees to consider their potential involvement earlier in the planning process. Therefore, I am inviting any suggestions your committee may have about how you can be involved in the Senedd@Swansea initiative.

Both the Deputy Presiding Officer and I took an active part in the comprehensive programme of events, visits and workshops at Senedd@Wrexham which directly engaged over 2,000 people in the Assembly's work. We, and the Members who were able to be involved received extremely positive feedback and this was also reflected in the local media. The Swansea event could provide your committee with an opportunity to forge new working relationships with many local organisations and local media.

Should this be of interest to you or your Committee I would be grateful if you could ask your Committee Clerk to liaise with my office to discuss further.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.



**Dame Rosemary Butler AM**  
**Presiding Officer**

E-bost newydd: [Swyddfa.Breifat@cynulliad.cymru](mailto:Swyddfa.Breifat@cynulliad.cymru) / Rhif ffôn newydd: 0300 200 6232  
New e-mail: [Private.Office@assembly.wales](mailto:Private.Office@assembly.wales) / New telephone number: 0300 200 6232  
Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg/We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh

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# Agenda Item 4.6

Committee Chairs  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay

Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



16 July 2015

Dear Chair

## Draft Wales Bill

As I'm sure you are aware, we expect the UK Government to publish a draft Wales Bill in the autumn with a period of consultation to follow, before the Bill itself is introduced sometime in spring 2016.

I have discussed the matter with the Deputy Presiding Officer in his capacity as Chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs (CLA) Committee. We have agreed that that Committee provides the most appropriate vehicle for the Assembly to consider the draft Bill. I am confident that the Committee has the membership, expertise and capacity to formulate a comprehensive and authoritative response for me and the Assembly to consider and, hopefully, endorse.

Although the Bill falls within the remit of the CLA Committee, its scrutiny will be strengthened considerably if other Committees are involved. In particular, it will be important that CLA Committee and the Assembly as a whole can draw on the policy expertise of other Committees when examining the impact of replacing our current conferred powers model with a new reserved powers model.

I would be grateful if you could consider with your Committee how to make space in what I am sure will be a very busy Autumn programme to undertake a serious examination of the Bill in relation to your Committee's remit. Your clerking team will be able to advise on how to time your response to add value to the work of CLA Committee and to ensure that the Assembly can influence the debate at Westminster.

**Dame Rosemary Butler AM, Presiding Officer  
Chair, Business Committee**

Bae Caerdydd  
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Ebost/Email: [private.office@assembly.wales](mailto:private.office@assembly.wales)

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg/We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh

Mark Drakeford AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services

Agenda Item 4.7

Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref MB/MD/2674/15

Ann Jones AM  
Chair  
Children, Young People and  
Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff. CF991NA

18 July 2015

Dear Ann,

Thank you for your letter of 23 June regarding Swansea University's work to analyse prescribing practice for children and young people experiencing mental illness.

I am pleased you found the briefing from Dr Ann John so informative. I believe this is the first such analysis of mental health prescribing practice for children and young people in Wales and adds significantly to international work in this field, as the SAIL database is so comprehensive with regard to primary care. It will also add to the NHS's work to reshape CAMHS services to make them more effective. Before I address your specific questions, it is interesting to consider some of the high level messages from the ADHD and antidepressant reports. Specifically:

- Wales appears no different to other countries in experiencing an increase in prescribing, particularly for 15-18 year olds, both for antidepressants and ADHD medication;
- Wales is also comparable to other countries in the rates of diagnosis and treatment between males and females for both cohorts; and
- The strong link between deprivation and prescribing is also important in the current economic climate.

In relation to your specific comments:

As far as data collection is concerned, GP prescribing data is considered robust and rightly needs to be in order to issue a prescription, though recording of diagnosis can be more subjective and dependent on individual GP's recording behaviour. Hospital admissions for secondary and tertiary care are also well recorded and Patient Episode Database data is extensively used. However out patient data can be incomplete, which may be a result of recording, or operational factors. The issue of monitoring prescribing by secondary services is a problem across all specialities. Different health boards have sought temporary solutions and the all Wales Pharmacy Group has developed a national IT solution which it is

seeking to implement over the next two years, which should help improve the robustness of the data.

In relation to your second point there are some medications which will be prescribed only in secondary care, but the majority of anti depressants and ADHD medication, even if started by CAMHS can usually be continued by the GP. Again GP prescribing varies depending on the individual GP practice. Some are unwilling to take on ongoing prescribing in a shared-care agreement with CAMHS, for a variety of reasons. In other cases CAMHS clinicians may prefer to adjust and manage doses until stabilised for a longer period of time. However it can then be managed in primary care, and this is generally seen as desirable and allows more prudent use of specialist time. The NICE technology appraisal 98 states "treatment with methylphenidate, atomoxetine or dexamfetamine should only be started after a specialist who is an expert in ADHD has thoroughly assessed the child or adolescent and confirmed the diagnosis. Once treatment has been started it can be continued and monitored by a GP." NICE Quality standard 39 suggests an annual specialist review is appropriate.

In relation to your final point on actions to be taken, you will have seen in the antidepressant report that Citalopram, which is not necessarily recommended for use in those under 18, has been widely used. Although the use of Citalopram was probably greater than we would like, it was a NICE (CG 28) recommended treatment option in depression for those unresponsive to other treatments, albeit it was an off label use. A March 2015 addendum to CG 28 made fluoxetine the only medicine named in the NICE guidance licensed for use in children. Given these recent changes and the fact the analysis undertaken by Swansea University only covered the period up to 2013 I have asked the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer to ask the All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre, which provides prescribing and medicines management services to NHS Wales, to do more background work and, if necessary, issue further guidance to GPs.

More generally I think the papers can helpfully inform the ongoing service change work in CAMHS and targeting of the recently announced £7.65m CAMHS investment and we have drawn it to the attention of the CAMHS Planning Network. The £1.1m announced to expand provision of psychological therapies in CAMHS can provide alternatives and adjuncts to medication. The £800,000 announced should improve early intervention in psychosis as well as help improve services for those suffering severe depression. In addition the £800,000 to expand access in Local Primary Mental Health Services can also improve joint shared care arrangements between primary and secondary care.

I will also ensure you are provided with copies of the phase two (antipsychotics) report once completed in September.

Best wishes,

Mark

**Mark Drakeford AC / AM**

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

National Assembly for Wales  
Petitions Committee

Ann Jones AM  
Chair of the Children, Young People  
and Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

6 August 2015

Dear 

**Petition P-04-552 Child Protection**

As you may be aware, the Petitions Committee has been considering the following petition.

*We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to review and strengthen child protection criteria and consider establishing a regulatory body for Wales. This should aim to ensure that those who have charge of children, whether that's in schools, youth clubs, charities where children are the main focus, or people coming into contact or being invited in as patrons, governors, ambassadors, public servants or anybody appointed by children's charities are assessed as to their suitability to work with and around children.*

*Additional information: As it stands, local and county councillors and people appointed as ambassadors or Chairs of children's charities do not undergo DBS checks. Most of these people get open door access to children because of their position. In the light of the Jimmy Saville affair and the Ian Watkins affair, will the Welsh Assembly now recognise that we can no longer blindly accept people on the basis of their celebrity or social position and allow them access to children.*



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
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Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA  
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0300 200 6565



At our meeting on 14 July, the Committee agreed to close the petition. In doing so, we took into account legal advice we have received which suggested that Welsh Ministers and the Assembly's ability to legislate in this area was significantly constrained.

Nevertheless, in closing the petition, the Committee agreed to draw it to your attention for information given your Committee's interest in this area.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill'.

William Powell AC/AM  
Cadeirydd/ Chair

Huw Lewis AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref SF/HL/1920/15

Ann Jones AM  
Chair, Children, Young People and  
Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

6 August 2015

Dear Ann,

**Copy of Grant-in-Aid allocation letter to Qualifications Wales**

During the Children, Young People and Education Committee's scrutiny of the Qualifications Wales Bill, I agreed to publish a copy of the Framework document and the Grant-in-Aid letter issued to Qualifications Wales.

I am pleased to attach a copy of the letter. The documents will also shortly be available electronically on the Welsh Government website.

In putting together the Qualifications Wales budget for 2015/16 my officials reviewed the set up and running costs against the forecasts provided in the Bill's Regulatory Impact Assessment that formed part of the Explanatory Memorandum. I am pleased to confirm that at the time of writing the projections for the 5 year costs are just under those published.

Finally, I have now appointed the majority of the Qualifications Wales Board members and am pleased to enclose some background information.

I trust that this information is helpful to Committee Members.

Yours sincerely

**Huw Lewis AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
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English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300  
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400  
Correspondence.Huw.Lewis@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

## **Attachment 1:**

### **Qualifications Wales Board – pen portraits**

#### **Ann Evans                      Chair, Qualifications Wales**

Ann Evans has been an independent education consultant since 2012 following four years as Chief Executive of Careers Wales, Mid Glamorgan and Powys. Her earlier positions include Assistant Chief Executive of ACCAC (Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales), a school Science teacher and a lecturer and manager in Further Education.

#### **Philip Blaker                      CEO, Qualifications Wales**

Philip was appointed as CEO Designate for Qualifications was in September 2014. Prior to that, he was Interim Director of Operations at, where he was accountable for the day-to-day delivery of UCAS' admissions services, including the processing of applications, collection of course data and verification services. He joined UCAS in November 2011, having previously worked with the organisation as a management consultant. Philip's career has been focused on the delivery of large scale complex operations, and, before becoming a consultant with PwC, he had a background in the delivery of national assessments and examinations. Philip was Director of Test Operations with the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and part of the senior management team with examinations board AQA. Philip has postgraduate qualifications in business management and is a qualified project and programme manager.

#### **Claire Morgan                      Board Member**

Claire Morgan is currently the Associate Dean of Quality and Standards at Cardiff University. Prior to this role Claire was a senior lecturer in Economics, with 20 years' experience in higher education, with specific interest in assessment policy and practice. Claire has also been appointed to work for the Quality Assurance Agency as an academic Higher Education Reviewer. Committed to the enhancement of the student experience Claire is a member of numerous Boards and working groups within Cardiff University. In August Claire starts a new role within Cardiff Metropolitan University as Dean for Learning and Teaching.

#### **Paul Croke                      Board member**

Paul Croke was the Principal of Yale College until 2011 following a successful career in further education for over 40 years. Paul is currently an education consultant specialising in post sixteen education and training, he is also Chair of Governors at Bridgend College. Paul was instrumental in writing the first ever Sports Strategy for Colleges in Wales and is currently the Chair of the Welsh Colleges Sports Co-ordinators' group. Paul is writing a PhD in conjunction with Colegau Cymru on the developments in the post sixteen sectors in Wales 1993-2011.

#### **Angela Maguire-Lewis                      Board member**

Angela Maguire-Lewis is a highly experienced senior manager and has worked in Work Based Learning for 20 years, currently working as a freelance educational consultant supporting companies on both operational and quality strategies. In her previous role as Operations Manager with Babcock International Group she managed work based learning contracts in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Angela has in-depth experience and knowledge of the design, delivery and evaluation of apprenticeship, employability and

alternative curriculum programmes. She has represented Work Based Learning providers in her former role as Board Member of NTFW and as a member of external stakeholder meetings for Post 16 education and skills in Wales. Throughout her career she has shown continual commitment to achieving high quality standards which has been enhanced through her work with Estyn as Additional Inspector.

**Isabel Nisbet**                      **Board member**

Isabel Nisbet has had a career in public service and regulation, particularly of education and educational assessment. She is a Scot and attended school and university in Glasgow, followed by postgraduate studies at Oxford. She held a range of civil service posts in Scotland and England, and in the 1990s moved to senior executive roles at in the regulation of doctors and of medical education. In 2005 she was appointed Director of Regulation at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and she subsequently became the first CEO of Ofqual, the regulator of examination and qualifications in England. From 2011-2014 she worked in South East Asia on behalf of Cambridge International Examinations. Isabel is now an Affiliated Lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and serves on several Boards and Committees.

**Caroline Burt**                      **Board member**

Dr Caroline Burt is the admission tutor and director of studies in history at Cambridge University. Caroline's career history includes tax analyst at Arthur Andersen Accountants and academic studies tutor at Cambridge University. Caroline is Chair of several groups and boards within Cambridge University and Trustee at Oakhome School and Governor at the Coopers Company and Coborn School in Essex. Caroline has won many awards and prizes throughout her career and will shortly be taking a sabbatical to write a book on medieval history.

**Dr Dylan Jones**                      **Board member (short-term)**

Dr Jones is the Headteacher of the Welsh-medium school Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg. His vision for and strategic direction of the school since its inception in 2000 were praised in the 2008 report on the school by Estyn, in which the school was awarded Grade 1 in all but one of the inspection categories. In 2010, Dr Jones was nominated for the NCSL Headteacher of the Year Award, and in 2012, he was Chair of the National Eisteddfod's Executive Committee. Dr Jones was also part of the Qualifications Wales Advisory Board that has supported the Qualifications Wales – Transition Team over the last two years, until it was disbanded in March 2015. He has been directly appointed on a short-term basis to the Board of Qualifications Wales while a further round of advertisement is carried out.

**Iestyn Davies**                      **Board member (short-term)**

Iestyn Davies is the lead staff member for the FSB, which represents the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales. The FSB's current membership in Wales stands in the region of 10,000, and it has an active role in lobbying and influencing government as well as supporting its members with a range of business benefits. Iestyn leads a team of seven full-time employees that supports FSB members in Wales via their regional and branch associations. He also provides direct support to the Chair of the FSB's Welsh Policy Unit. Iestyn was part of the Qualifications Wales Advisory Board that has supported the Qualifications Wales – Transition Team over the last two years, until it was disbanded in March 2015. He has been directly appointed on a short-term basis while a further round of advertisement is carried out.



Ein cyf/Our ref SF/HL/1920/15

Ann Evans  
Chair of Qualifications Wales  
Q2, Pencarn Lane,  
Newport  
NP10 8UH

6 August 2015

Dear Ann,

### **Qualifications Wales Grant Allocation Letter for 2015 – 2016**

I am very pleased to be writing to you to confirm the first Grant Allocation for Qualifications Wales. This is a key moment for education in Wales, marking the successful implementation, and indeed completion, of the recommendations set out by Huw Evans in his 2012 Review of Qualifications.

You are embarking on an important journey, to shape the qualifications system in Wales to ensure that qualifications are understood and valued and meet the needs of our young people and the Welsh economy. As a regulator, I expect you to be tough but fair and develop an effective regulatory relationship with Awarding Bodies. I also look forward to seeing you demonstrate your independence by both challenging and advising Ministers. Equally, I look forward to your direct engagement with partners across Wales to contribute to the on-going development of education in Wales.

I have sought to provide you with the best possible start. The early appointment of the CEO has allowed the organisation to be established in tandem with the legislative process. I will be transferring assets, staff and contracts to you when you commence your regulatory functions in September. I have appointed a strong Board and I am confident they will support you as you develop your strategic and operational plans.

The Qualifications Wales Act clearly lays out your principal aims of ensuring that qualifications, and the Welsh qualification system, are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales, and of promoting public confidence. It also covers the matters to which you must pay regard.

Qualifications Wales is being established at an exciting time for education in Wales. There is a new momentum in Welsh education, driven by our reforms, and focused on raising standards across the board. In June I announced that the Welsh Government would accept in full the recommendations of Professor Graham Donaldson's report 'Successful Futures' and we will now begin the task of creating a new curriculum for Wales.

Qualifications Wales will be an important partner in the development of our new curriculum and I look to you to consider how best to ensure that our curriculum aims and purposes are appropriately reflected in the qualifications that young people take. There are two key areas where I would welcome more immediate advice on the alignment of qualifications and the new curriculum. The first relates to the Welsh Language. As I said in my statement to the Assembly, a curriculum that is by Wales for Wales must reflect our confidence and pride in Wales as a bilingual nation, with the strength and assurance to enable all learners to acquire skills in both Welsh and English. There is much to be done to improve pupils' Welsh-language skills in our English-medium schools at all ages. In support of the wider work being undertaken to strengthen acquisition of the Welsh language I would like Qualifications Wales to consider the current range of Welsh second language qualifications and advise on how these should change in light of the recommendations made in 'Successful Futures'. I would also welcome your advice on how, over the longer term, we can raise the expectations embodied in those qualifications.

The second area concerns Religious Education qualifications. In his report Professor Graham Donaldson identifies four purposes of education, one of which is that children should be ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world. I would welcome your advice on how qualifications relating to religion might also incorporate philosophy and ethics providing an opportunity for young people to ponder ideas around ethics and citizenship and what it means to be a citizen of a free country.

Given the current GCSE and A level reform programme I would welcome early views on both these issues.

The reform of our qualifications sees the first phase of new GCSEs and A levels and the Welsh Baccalaureate being taught from September 2015. Ensuring our schools and colleges are well prepared and confident in their understanding of the requirements of the new qualifications in order to teach them effectively is a top priority for Welsh Government and I welcome your support to ensure that no momentum is lost.

As the regulator I would also like to see Qualifications Wales considering the 2014 lessons learned report produced by Huw Evans, and advising me of any recommendations that it will be taking forward.

I am currently considering the results of the consultation on Apprenticeships, and will soon want to discuss with you what role, if any, Qualifications Wales should have in the future. I would also like to remind you that Qualifications Wales is one of the three key partners in the on-going promotion of the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CFQW) and encourage you to consider how you can best support this.

During the development of the legislation I put forward an amendment to enable Qualifications Wales to both 'approve' qualifications, but also to 'designate' qualifications as eligible for funding. I believe that this provides an important flexibility and I have agreed to only transfer a small number of qualifications as 'approved'. In doing so it is important that I state my clear expectation that the volume of approved qualifications will increase significantly over time.

The legislation that I have introduced enables you to give equal attention to both general and vocational qualifications helping to build parity of esteem – an aim that has wide-spread support.

Finally, I would like to re-confirm my commitment to considering an ‘awarding’ role for Qualifications Wales in the longer term, and I look forward to receiving your advice on this in due course.

### **Grant in Aid Funding**

I am pleased to confirm that the Welsh Government will provide Qualifications Wales with Grant in Aid funding as set out in the budget split below:

#### **Grant in Aid Budget Allocation**

	<b>2015-16 £m</b>
Revenue* GIA	5.626
Capital Expenditure	0
Non Cash (Depreciation)**	0
<b>Total Grant in Aid</b>	<b>5.626</b>

Payment of grant-in-aid is conditional on compliance with the financial arrangements agreed in Qualifications Wales Framework Document.

Yours sincerely



**Huw Lewis AC / AM**

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills

**Huw Lewis AC / AM**  
**Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau**  
**Minister for Education and Skills**

**Agenda Item 4.10**



**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**

Ein cyf/Our ref MB/HL/3091/15

Ann Jones AM,  
Chair,  
Children, Education and Young  
People Committee,  
National Assembly for Wales

6 August 2015

Dear Ann,

I appeared before the Children Young People and Education Committee in December to provide evidence on the committee's inquiry into educational outcomes for children from low income households. At that meeting I said that I thought the work of school staff employed to work with families was worth a closer look nationally.

I asked my officials to conduct a short review of this work and I attach a copy of the report for the committee's information.

Yours sincerely,

**Huw Lewis AC / AM**  
**Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau**  
**Minister for Education and Skills**

# Family Liaison Officers in Schools in Wales

A short study on the work undertaken by designated support staff with children and their families in a sample of schools in Wales.

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July 2015

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## 1. Introduction

1.1. *Rewriting the Future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools* is the Welsh Government's policy on tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment. The policy is underpinned by significant investment in the form of the Pupil Deprivation Grant which, in 2015-16 was over £82 million. A further £4.5 million has been invested in the Communities First Pupil Deprivation Grant Matched Fund over 3 years to encourage schools and communities to work collaboratively to tackle the debilitating effects of poverty.

*'...evidence shows that family characteristics and the home learning environment are a significant factor in determining children and young people's attainment.'*

Qualified for Life (2014)

- 1.2. One of *Rewriting the Future's* four key themes is family and community engagement, in recognition of the fact that what happens outside school plays a significant part in how well children perform when they are in school. Many schools have acknowledged the influence of the home environment and have employed non-teaching members of staff to work with parents and carers. These staff members have a range of titles which reflect the variety of roles they undertake. For ease of reference the term 'Family Liaison Officer (FLO)' is used throughout this report.
- 1.3. A small-scale study was undertaken to provide a clearer view of the roles and impact of FLOs and the way schools use staff to work with families. It has included visits to 11 schools and discussions with three Community First co-ordinators. Survey Monkey was used to distribute a short on-line questionnaire via the Welsh Government's Dysg newsletter. Responses to the questionnaire were received from 24 line managers and individuals employed to undertake work in the context of the school and family. A number of reports and research articles on family engagement and pupil deprivation were considered to add context and breadth to the focus of this study.
- 1.4. Completion of this report coincided with publication of *FaCE the Challenge Together: family and engagement toolkit for schools in Wales*. Where the *FaCE* guidance addresses issues in the summary of findings, these are referenced in this report.

## 2. Findings – Programmes

- 2.1. The study found a wide range of activities and support provided to families by schools. Schools in the sample have recognised the important contribution that families can make to support their children's learning.
- 2.2. There was a greater prevalence of staff identified as FLOs in the primary schools surveyed than in the secondary schools.
- 2.3. Most of FLO posts are relatively new and much of the focus has been on providing non-formal family activities such as weekly coffee mornings; family and child cookery classes; and Dads and Lads projects.
- 2.4. Some staff are engaged in the transition of learners moving from primary to secondary schools. There were good examples of support which help learners feel better prepared for secondary school.
- 2.5. The work undertaken in the secondary schools in this study tended to place greater emphasis on direct support for learners. This support included pastoral care, additional support for literacy and numeracy, homework, counselling and help with behavioural issues. It was not always clear that learners in the target groups received priority support for such approaches.
- 2.6. Family engagement most often featured in the secondary sector where a specific intervention required family support rather than as a system of ongoing and proactive engagement.
- 2.7. Many of the schools that responded have developed both formal and informal links to external agencies. The formal links tended to be in relation to services such as the criminal justice system, social services and CAMHS, as well as other targeted specialist support.
- 2.8. FLOs often act as the first point of contact in facilitating engagement on behalf of families with a range of services such as team around the family, health or social services, or services provided by the voluntary sector. This approach has the benefit of providing one contact point for the family.
- 2.9. The wide and varied role of FLOs has led to interventions aimed at increasing engagement with families, keeping learners in school and improving their educational outcomes. The staff who responded to the survey identified a range of approaches that they used to measure impact, including:
  - a detailed action plan setting out targets for family engagement;
  - improving national test scores;
  - improving attendance figures; and
  - narrowing of the gap between pupils eligible for free schools meals and those who are not eligible.

### 3. Other evidence - Programmes:

- 3.1. There is only limited international evidence in terms of what works in secondary schools in relation to family engagement:

*'The association between parental involvement and a child's academic success is well established, but rigorous evaluation of approaches to improve learning through parental involvement is more sparse. The evidence is predominantly from primary level and the early years, though there are studies which have looked at secondary schools. Impact studies tend to focus on reading and mathematics attainment'*

The Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit

- 3.2. There is evidence<sup>1</sup> however, that parental engagement, particularly for learners from low income households, can reduce the dip in attainment at transition from primary into secondary school. Estyn<sup>2</sup> has also found that schools and setting that are successful in tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment often have strong links with parents.

- 3.1. The NFER<sup>3</sup> found that when parental engagement leads to an improved home learning environment and increased parental confidence in supporting children's literacy at home, there can be significant impacts on achievement. This reinforces Battle-Bailey et al's findings that:

*Parents who were given interactive homework and were trained on how to support that homework, doubled the amount of time they spent on helping their children ... and their children performed the best."*

Battle-Bailey et al. (2004) The Effects of Interactive Reading Homework and Parent Involvement on Children's Inference Responses Springer

- 3.2. The NFER, however, found that schools often do not robustly evaluate their parental engagement work and this finding echoes those of the Department of Education in its review of best practice in parental engagement<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson P., (2011) *A Rapid Evidence Assessment Investigating the Drop in Attainment during the Transition Phase with a Particular Focus on Child Poverty*. Welsh Government

<sup>2</sup> *The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, 2013-2014*

<sup>3</sup> Grayson, H. (2013). *Rapid Review of Parental Engagement and Narrowing the Gap in Attainment for Disadvantaged Children*. Slough and Oxford: NFER and Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Goodhall, J, Vorhaus, J. (2011) *Review of best practice in parental engagement*. Department of Education. London

## **Links with the FaCE Toolkit**

The FaCE guidance provides examples of a range of practice in Foundation and primary phase which act as a gateway to providing more formal family engagement activities. These support families to understand how they can engage effectively in supporting their child in such areas as literacy, numeracy, attendance and behaviour [2.3].

The FaCE guidance makes reference to importance of planned transitions activities which include family engagement at Foundation, Primary and Secondary which could include informal 'meet the teacher/meet the family sessions' [2.4].

Theme five of the FaCE guidance identifies how schools can develop or build on existing partnership with agencies and their communities [2.7].

Theme four provides engagement for learning resources for Foundation Phase, primary and secondary sectors [3.1]

Theme 1 resource 6 provides schools with guidance on conducting evaluations [3.2].

## **4. Findings – Qualifications Skills, Roles and Responsibilities**

- 4.1. Over half the respondents to the survey said that their role exclusively involved working with families and learners. Other respondents combined this work with other roles and responsibilities.
- 4.2. Typically a FLO's role involves:
  - organising parenting classes;
  - organising after-school activities;
  - identifying, supporting and empowering disengaged families;
  - engaging with parents and teachers to provide activities to promote learning; and
  - developing solutions to personal, emotional and physical problems, including those which relate to behaviour
- 4.3. There is no requirement for school staff involved in working with families to hold a relevant qualification. There are, however, a number of qualifications available which cover a range of approaches to working with parents
- 4.4. The study found that FLOs do hold a wide range of relevant qualifications, such as teaching, nursing and support staff qualifications. Others are parents of children who are, or have been pupils at the school and have very close links with the community in which they live. Many schools consider this is important for effective engagement with families.

4.5. A number of FLOs in this study were attending relevant courses provided by key partners, but this approach seemed to be on an ad hoc basis and was dependent on the availability of courses.

## 5. Other Evidence – Qualifications, Skills, Roles and Responsibilities:

5.1. Goodall and Vorhaus<sup>5</sup> suggest that school staff should be given appropriate coaching and training to enable them to engage with parents effectively. This is particularly important for staff whose backgrounds are very different to those of the families they are working with.

5.2. Parenting in Wales Guidance states:

*‘Practitioners should be appropriately skilled, trained and supervised to work with parents. They should have appropriate personal skills and traits and their work should be underpinned by the National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents principles and values’*

Parenting in Wales: Guidance on engagement and support (2014)  
Welsh Government

5.3. The National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents were originally approved by the United Kingdom (UK) Regulatory bodies (QCA, SQA, ACCAC and QCA NI) in 2005. The Standards were updated in January 2011.

5.4. Harris and Goodall<sup>6</sup> found that sustained support, resource and training were prerequisites for schools to engage parents effectively and make a sustainable difference. This was particularly true for engaging families in low income households. The researchers concluded that staff, including non-teaching staff, who work most closely with parents, should be provided with training.

### **Links with the FaCE Toolkit**

Theme 2, resource 2 outlines the role of a Family and Community Engagement Officer (or FLO) and provides an example job description [4].

The FaCE guidance provides examples of what all schools should do and what successful schools do. This includes conducting a development needs analysis as part of the school development plan [4.5].

Theme 2, resource 2 provides a template for a development needs analysis and sets out the National Occupational Standards for working with families [5.2].

Theme 1, Resource 1 provides information about the School Development Plan and budgeting for staff roles and development [5.4]

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<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> Harris, A. and Goodall, J (2007). *Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement: Do Parents Know They Matter?* University of Warwick

## 6. Some insights:

- 6.1. Schools in the study recognise the importance of family engagement and for some it was a key priority for the school:

*'[Our aim is to] improve standards and wellbeing in pupils by ensuring parents and carers have a better understanding of ways to help their children at home. Develop a true family-friendly school built on cooperation and trust.'*

- 6.2. They have a range of aims and objectives for engaging families, such as improving standards, reducing absenteeism or closing the gap in attainment resulting from poverty. For some schools the reasons for employing FLOs have evolved over time:

*'Originally [the role was] to assist with improving attendance but the role moved more to family support by the nature of the requests. The role is primarily support and engagement rather than assisting with improving attendance.'*

- 6.3. Some schools employed FLOs to reduce the burden on head teachers and senior leaders, or else to provide a more proportionate and less threatening approach to head teacher involvement:

*'...to provide a specific link who would act as the first call with families...It was important that they could build trust with families... to give a graduated response before the head teacher needed to be involved.'*

## 7. Funding:

- 7.1. Schools fund FLOs through a variety of mechanisms:

- Most Communities First Pupil Deprivation Grant (CFPDG) matched fund projects employ a FLO. These are often shared between schools or between schools and Community First Clusters.
- Some schools that are Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) Pathways to Success Schools have funded FLOs through the SCC grant.
- Schools are increasingly using the PDG to fund FLOs.
- Some schools use core funding to employ FLOs.

- 7.2. Those schools that have used grant funding see the value of the work that their FLOs do and are many are committed to finding ways to continue to fund the post beyond the lifetime of the grant.
- 7.3. Some schools have been nervous that employing FLOs was ineligible expenditure under the terms and conditions of the Pupil Deprivation Grant. Welsh Government has published refreshed guidance which makes it clear that the grant may be used in this way.

## **8. Summary of Findings and Conclusions:**

- 8.1. There is a wide variety of activity being undertaken in schools to engage families and just as many reasons that schools undertake this activity. Family Liaison Officers have varied backgrounds and skills; their family engagement activity may be part of a wider remit or may be the main remit of their role. Some FLOs have sole responsibility for engaging with families and may be shared between schools, where others, particularly in the secondary sector, are part of a wider family engagement team with different remits, such as pastoral support, improving attendance, and supporting family learning.
- 8.2. Research evidence suggests that family engagement has positive outcomes on educational attainment, and that this is particularly true for learners from low income households. There is little robust evidence, however, about what it is that makes the difference. This may have a bearing on the reason why there is such a wide range of family engagement activity in schools. While schools may, and often do, evaluate the impact of their own work with parents, the range and variety of FLO posts, skills and responsibilities makes it difficult to form an evidence-based assessment of the overall impact of FLOs nationally.
- 8.3. The Welsh Government has produced guidance and resources for schools, and the most recent of these, the FaCE guidance, addresses many of the findings of this study. The framework at Annex 2 takes account of current Welsh Government initiatives but also suggests ways of improving key points such as transition and secondary school engagement.

# Case Studies

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## 1. Pembroke Dock Community School

The two family support officers at Pembroke Dock Community School provide in-house provision for parents, children and families of the school. They aim to build positive relationships with families where parents know that they can drop in for support and advice throughout the day. They also work closely with external agencies such as the police/community police, Team Around the Family, social workers, the school nurse, health visitor, Sandy Bears bereavement counselling service, and housing; making referrals as necessary.

The pair provides emotional and practical help, support and advice to families that may be experiencing long or short-term difficulties. This might include signposting support to families with housing concerns, completing forms, working with external agencies, organizing school clubs or simply being somebody for parents to talk to. They will arrange for children to be collected from home and transported to school if a parent is experiencing difficulties such as illness. They regularly work with over 260 pupils and over 100 families.

Each term begins with the family support officers making home visits to aid the transition of children from Flying Start to Early Years. Families value the support, during what can be an anxious time, when their children start full time education.

The weekly Mother and Toddler group meets in the school and this is led by the family support officers. They actively encourage parents to attend, reinforcing the benefits of joining other parents at the weekly group. Together they work with Communities First and a parent helper volunteer to ensure that parents and toddlers have a positive and enjoyable experience.

Part of their role is to improve the attendance of pupils who are struggling to attend school regularly or who are persistently late. This involves speaking with the families and their children to encourage attendance at their 8 am morning clubs and arrange collection by the school mini bus each morning. The children are also encouraged to access the support available to them.

The school provides a variety of clubs including cookery, ICT, iPad, free running, sports, story reading, library and intervention programmes. Attendance in the school is now averaging at 95% and continues to improve with this support.

The school also participates in Save the Children's Families and Schools Together (FAST) programme. The second cohort taking part in the FAST programme was lead by the school's family support officers. Together they worked with the school, parent and community partners to organise and deliver the eight week programme. Throughout the activities FAST partners act as a 'shadow' to offer support and advice to encourage the parents.

The family support officers also organise weekly coffee afternoons. This is a time where parents can informally chat with them about any concerns they may have and where Story Sacks and Numicon parent packs, which support their children in literacy and numeracy, are loaned out. The Community Police, Community First and local clergy often pop in for a coffee and a chat which is warmly welcomed by the parents.

The family support officers work with parents and the school nurse in preparing Healthcare Plans. They liaise with the school catering manager to advise on special dietary requirements and allergies. They also work closely with the head teacher and staff with child protection/wellbeing concerns and make referrals to agencies for additional support. They also attend Core Group meetings with families and other professionals to support families with their protective plan.

## 2. Millbrook Primary School

Millbrook Primary School is a one form entry 3-11 primary school located on The Bettws Estate in Newport. There are 240 pupils on roll. Approximately 28% of pupils are entitled to free school meals and 30% of pupils have additional educational needs. Bettws is a Communities First area.

The school's philosophy is that:

- happy children learn;
- to support the child effectively the school must support the family;
- to support the family effectively, the school must work with the community;
- engagement is most effective when it involves children and their families from a very early age.

The head teacher, Lindsey Watkins, has visited several community schools in the USA and the school's approach is based on first hand research looking at the work of Children's Aid Society Schools in New York where community schools employ family engagement officers.

The school's work is also based on research which highlights the positive impact that working to engage parents and pupils can have on standards of learning.

*'Parental engagement is a powerful lever for raising student achievement in schools. Where parents and teachers work together to improve learning, the gains in achievement are significant.'*

Harris, A. and Goodall, J (2007). Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement: Do Parents Know They Matter? University of Warwick

The school provides on site multi-agency support for families and the community including Communities First, Newport City Council Team Around the Family, Flying Start, The Bridge Achievement Centre and Stay and Play. It has found taking a multi-agency partnership approach has a number of benefits:

- it provides a consistent joined up approach from all agencies;
- it ensures that families are better supported;
- it allows the school and its partner agencies to be proactive;
- it has provided additional resources to the school at no extra cost (Communities First have match funded the school's Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG), for example); and
- the school is better equipped to tackle educational issues by alleviating or supporting other family issues.

In addition to its multi-agency work the school uses its PDG to employ a Pupil and Family Engagement Officer (PFEO) and a nurture officer who work in tandem to support the particular needs of pupils and their families.

The PFEO strives to motivate and engage pupils and their families in learning. Family Thursdays have become a feature of the school with parents and children engaging in literacy and numeracy activities on a regular basis. The school's reading café has proven to be particularly popular. The PFEO works with groups of children throughout the school and is well-placed to link pupils specific learning needs with their work with families.

The PFEO has also provided out-of-hours learning including summer holiday Coding Clubs for children and their families. The strong partnership with Communities First has supported

other family learning initiatives such as a family homework club in the local library. The school also operates a parent council which has representatives from each class in the school. The PFEO works with the school leadership team to guide the work of the parent council.

### **Outcomes and lessons learned**

The impact of this work is a joined up approach to pupil and family intervention; an increase in the numbers of parents involved in pupil learning; improved pupil attendance; and improved reading behaviours of targeted children. Some examples of improvements are outlined below:

- Parental engagement in maths family learning workshops has increased from 40% to just over 80%.
- Whole school attendance has risen by over 1.5% in the last year
- Individual pupil attendance case studies have had increases of up to 50%.
- Staff and parents report that pupils are showing a more positive attitude towards their learning.
- Pupils involved in a family reading café initiative are reading with greater fluency and understanding.
- Parents report that they are reading more at home.
- 100% of pupils with parents engaged in this work have achieved the targets set for them.

The school piloted a family engagement officer role last academic year as a shared role with three other local schools. This allowed ideas and best practice to be shared, but it limited the amount of work that could be done with the families at Millbrook. It also meant that work was focussed specifically on families and allowed little time to link this with the pupils' work. It was decided that it would be more beneficial to have a full-time engagement officer and to adapt the job description so that the work was also closely linked to pupil learning.

The school did not want to lose the benefits it had from the joined learning opportunities with other schools. For this reason Millbrook has hosted a free Family Engagement Network meeting for interested schools in South Wales. This is something that school aims to continue with partner schools in the future.

**Outcomes framework for pupil and family engagement for PDG and LAC from 0 —10**

**Family Engagement**

Parenting support programmes.  
Early language development and play skills

Individual family / school visits.  
Family induction evenings  
Non formal family activities  
Targeted family activities programmes to support reading

Non formal family activities  
Formal planned training to support behaviour and emotional issues  
Raising horizons activities for families

Engaging with parents to ensure they participate in transition Activities.  
Hold events for parents with key secondary school staff including those in support roles

Delivering relevant activities and programmes to build pupils self esteem and resilience  
Delivering transition activities with FLO and teaching staff from secondary school

**Pupil**

**Programmes**

Flying Start

Foundation Phase

0

3/4

7

8

9

10

**Ages**

## Outcomes framework for pupil and family engagement for PDG and LAC from 11 —16

	11	12/13	14	15	16
<b>Family Engagement</b>	Engaging with parents to ensure they participate in transition	Support for parents evenings Ongoing and regular communication with Families Curriculum aspiration planning with child and families/ GCSE choices Raising aspirations activities Effective work experience	Course / GCSE support engagement with Families. Additional study engagement and planning. Career pathway discussion		Engagement with families for transition support to post 16 provision
<b>Pupil</b>	Pupil engagement/ pupil voice	Learning mentor support Study skills			
<b>Programmes</b>	Transition				

**Ages**

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## Survey of transport for post-16 learners attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education

### Background

The Welsh Language Commissioner has received a number of requests for advice on transport for post-16 learners attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education. The requests were submitted by organizations and individuals in response to the revision of the provision of some local authorities in Wales. Following this, the Commissioner decided to collect evidence on post-16 learners and associated local authority transport arrangements.

On 2 April 2015 a letter was sent to all local authority Directors of Education in Wales, asking them to complete a survey on transport arrangements for post-16 learners. Questions were included about:

- the current arrangements and any fees charged
- the number and percentage of post-16 learners attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education
- revisions of the arrangements and any Welsh language impact assessment

By the end of July, 21 of 22 authorities had responded. The exception was Carmarthenshire Council. A summary of the main findings can be found below.

### Current arrangements

Eight local authorities impose a fee on post-16 learners wishing to use transport, ranging from £60 to £380. The fees are summarised as follows:

Annual fee	Number of authorities
< £100	1
£100 - £200	3 (one charges £300 for transport outside the catchment area)
£250 - £300	2
> £300	2

One authority intends, as a first step, to increase the fee from £60 to £80 (an increase of 33%) from September 2015. Two other authorities had increased the fee since 2012/13. In one case, the fee was increased from £45 to £347 (an increase of 671%). Despite the fact that the authority concerned recognised the difficulties that the change would cause for families, it did not conduct an impact assessment as it was not a change of policy. The authority now acknowledges that this was an oversight. In the second case, the fee was increased from £255 to £380 (an increase of 49%). An equality impact assessment was held and the authority concluded that the change would have an equal effect on all learners using transport, considering matters of language, faith, mainstream provision and distance.

### Learners who rely on transport

Fifteen authorities provided information on the percentage of learners who rely on free transport or assisted transport from the local authority. In most cases, this applies to 50% or more of the post-16 learners attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education. The information is summarised as follows:

<b>Percentage of learners attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education who rely on transport</b>	<b>Number of authorities</b>
< 10%	0
10% - 19%	1
20% - 29%	0
30% - 39%	0
40% - 49%	1
50% - 59%	5
60% - 69%	1
70% - 79%	1
80% - 89%	2
90% - 100%	4

One authority provided the number of post-16 learners but the percentage of all pupils who rely on transport. Two authorities provided the number of learners but not the percentage, and in the case of the other three no information was provided on this aspect. Two stated that no details were available on the learners who rely on free transport.

Not only were some authorities unable to provide information on the post-16 learners who rely on transport, but six of them were unable to identify the cost of the provision to the authority. In the case of two of them, they were unable to separate the cost of transport for post-16 learners from the total cost of school transport. In the case of the other four, they were unable to separate the cost of Welsh-medium learners' transport from that of English-medium learners' transport.

### Progression

The authorities were asked to identify the number of learners who were likely to attend Welsh-medium or bilingual post-16 education in the future. Five authorities were unable to provide this information. One stated that a proposed change to its transport policy, namely the withdrawal of free transport, could affect the number of learners attending the Welsh-medium secondary school. However, there was uncertainty regarding the exact nature of the impact.

One authority gave a general estimate for post-16 education in the future, without detailing the number likely to attend Welsh-medium education. Another authority provided the number of learners who would be eligible to receive post-16 education during the next three years. Neither of these authorities provided the current number of post-16 Welsh-medium learners and therefore it was not possible to compare the figures.

Seven authorities anticipated that learner numbers would remain constant on the whole. One stated that it hoped to maintain the number of Welsh-medium learners in the context of a 10% fall in learner numbers in general. Seven authorities anticipated an increase in the number of learners, ranging from a small increase of 10 to a substantial increase of 148 by 2024. In the case of the authority experiencing the largest increase, namely 54%, it also stated that 84% of its post-16 learners relied on transport.

### Proposed revisions

Thirteen authorities are revising their arrangements or considering doing so. Of these, three are considering withdrawing free transport, two are considering withdrawing the provision or introducing a fee, and another four are considering introducing a fee or increasing the current fee. Three authorities will introduce changes in September 2015 and another three are considering introducing changes in September 2016.

Of the 13 authorities concerned, two stated that they had conducted an impact assessment. Another three stated that they had conducted a consultation as well as an impact assessment. Copies were provided of a consultation document, three

impact assessments and a report on the outcomes of a consultation and impact assessment.

The type of information provided in these documents varied. One impact assessment contained the outcomes of a consultation, which asked the public whether the withdrawal of free transport was likely to affect Welsh-medium education and whether Welsh-medium schools should be protected. A list of protected characteristics was presented, including the impact on Welsh-medium learners and their families under the 'race' characteristic. In another impact assessment, the Welsh language was one of a number of listed characteristics, along with possible impacts and mitigation measures. There was no reference to the Welsh language in another impact assessment. In the case of the report, a response was included to a comment made during the consultation on the possible impact on Welsh-medium schools of changing the travelling distance criteria. A policy impact assessment was included in an appendix, with the Welsh language listed alongside other equality elements.

The way in which authorities analysed the possible impacts of policy changes also varied. One authority stated that some of its consultees believed that the withdrawal of free transport would have a disproportionate impact on the Welsh-medium secondary school due to the school's large catchment area. The authority acknowledged that the number of Welsh-medium post-16 learners could fall as pupils could choose to continue their education in another institution. This could mean that post-16 Welsh-medium education was no longer viable, leading to a significant impact on the number of Welsh speakers and the promotion of the Welsh language in the county. It was noted that this impact would have to be considered immediately.

Another authority referred to the Welsh language in assessing the impact of the proposal to withdraw free transport for post-16 learners. It acknowledged that the proposal could affect learners' ability to access further education and that there were limited choices for learners wishing to receive Welsh-medium post-16 education.

Another authority had decided, from September 2015 onwards, to provide transport from specific pick-up points within three miles of the homes of secondary school pupils. In its response to the survey, the authority stated that the change would not have a disproportionate impact on the Welsh language and that it would affect all pupils wishing to use the service. There was no reference to the Welsh language in the relevant impact assessment document.

Another authority intends, from September 2015 onwards, to provide transport for post-16 learners living three miles away from their education institution, rather than

two miles away. In assessing the impact of the change in terms of equality, the authority noted that there would be no impact on the Welsh language.

Four other authorities stated that they intended to conduct an impact assessment when reviewing or adapting their policies. One of these authorities stated that it did not anticipate that the proposed change (a fee increase) would have an impact on the Welsh language in particular. Another authority made the same comment on the same change, without any commitment to conducting an impact assessment.

Another authority stated that it might review learner transport in the near future, despite conducting a consultation in 2014. The options considered at that time included introducing a fee of £230 for post-16 learners and withdrawing free transport. However, a decision was made to continue providing free transport for post-16 learners, to specific local institutions from September 2015. The authority stated that it had considered the impact of the proposed changes on the Welsh language in reaching its decision.

### **Past revisions**

The authorities were asked to provide information on any changes to their transport arrangements since 2012/13. As stated above, two authorities had increased learners' fees. One authority stated that it did not anticipate a reduction in the number of post-16 learners in the coming years. The other authority explained that the change had not led to a reduction in the number of post-16 learners receiving a transport grant to attend Welsh-medium education outside the county. It also explained that it was conducting a consultation on the establishment of a Welsh-medium secondary school in the county.

Another authority had revised its arrangements but did not provide details. It did not conduct an impact assessment as it considered the situation to be neutral in terms of benefits and drawbacks. It referred to the percentage of learners who remained at the Welsh-medium secondary school in order to receive post-16 education after 2012/13 and stated that it had reached the target set in its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (70%).

### **Impact assessment**

The differences described above highlight inconsistency in the way in which authorities conduct impact assessments and reach conclusions based on those exercises. Furthermore, the way in which authorities decide whether or not an assessment should be conducted is inconsistent. This is highlighted by the decision described above by two authorities to increase fees. As noted, an impact assessment was held in one instance but not in the other, as the authority concerned

did not consider that a change of fee was tantamount to a change of policy. Although the decision to conduct an impact assessment is commended in the second instance, it is not possible to agree with the conclusion that introducing the same fee for every learner has an equal effect on every learner. No evidence was provided to support this standpoint.

### The survey's main findings

To conclude, the following findings are noted.

1. In terms of learners' transport costs, there is a wide variety not only between the authorities providing free transport and those charging a fee, but between those charging a fee. The highest fee is over six times higher than the lowest.
2. Of those post-16 learners attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education, 50% or more rely on transport, in the case of the majority of authorities who responded to the survey.
3. Not all authorities who responded to the survey were able to provide information on the post-16 learners who rely on transport, the cost of the provision to the authority or the likely number of learners in the future.
4. Over half the authorities are revising their arrangements or considering doing so, and over a quarter intend to introduce changes during the next two academic years.
5. The way in which authorities assess the impact of policy changes on the Welsh language lacks consistency. As a result of this, and the lack of detail referred to above, it is unclear whether every authority recognises the long-term implications of changes to transport arrangements for Welsh-medium and bilingual education.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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17 August 2015

Dear colleague,

I am pleased to enclose a copy of the *Review of the Financial Ring Fencing Arrangements for Mental Health Services in Wales*.

The review concludes that the stated original purpose of the ring fence – to protect expenditure on mental health services – has largely been achieved. It makes a series of proposals for improving the system for the future which I will consider.

I am also copying this letter to opposition spokespeople.

**Mark Drakeford AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services

# Agenda Item 6

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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