

# Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 24 September 2015

Meeting time: 09.15

For further information contact:

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**09.15 – 09.30 – Private Pre-meeting**

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**1 Motion to elect temporary Chair**

**2 Introductions, apologies and substitutions**

(09.30)

**3 Discussion with Regional Education Consortia – Education through  
Regional Working (ERW)**

(09.30 – 10.30)

(Pages 1 – 21)

ERW

CYPE(4)-22-15 – Paper 1

Betsan O'Connor, Managing Director – ERW

Eifion Evans, Strategic Director: Learning and Partnerships / Regional Lead

Director – ERW

**4 Discussion with Regional Education Consortia – Regional School  
Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales (GwE)**

(10.30 – 11.30)

(Pages 22 – 27)

GwE



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

CYPE(4)-22-15 – Paper 2

Huw Foster Evans, Managing Director – GwE

Ian Budd, Lead Director of North Wales – GwE

## **5 Papers to note**

**Letter from NSPCC Cymru**

(Pages 28 – 29)

CYPE(4)-22-15 – Paper to note 3

**Universities Wales Briefing Note on the Welsh Government Budget 2016-17**

(Pages 30 – 37)

CYPE(3)-22-14 – Paper to note 4

## **6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the remainder of the meeting.**

(11.30)

## **7 Consideration of Committee forward work programme**

(11.30 – 12.00)

(Pages 38 – 41)

CYPE(4)-22-15 – Private paper 5

Document is Restricted



Ein Rhanbarth ar Waith  
Education through Regional Working

# Children, Young People and Education Committee

24<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Cynghrair o 6 awdurdod lleol yw ERW a reolir gan gyd-bwyllgor cyfansoddiadol cyfreithiol.  
Y nod yw gweithredu strategaeth a chynllun busnes rhanbarthol cytunedig a chefnogi gwelliant ysgolion.

ERW is an alliance of 6 local authorities governed by a legally constituted joint committee.  
Its aim is to implement the agreed regional strategy and business plan to support school improvement.



## Context

Standards are good compared to other regions, with performance improving in a sustainable and consistent manner.

The overall performance is good for the following reasons:

- the overall school performance level has remained the same with a provisional regional performance for Level 2 +, at 60.2%;
- attendance continues to improve, and is better than other regions, with progress continuing in the secondary sector to 94.0% in 2015; there was an increase of 1.5 per pupil in the primary sector to 94.9%.

Although our performance, in general, was higher than the Welsh average for Level 2 +, the overall performance standards at one local authority remains lower than expected. There are areas of good and excellent practice in several schools, and low standards in other places. Although it is recognized that the performance at Level 2 + in ERW is better than in other regions, all local authorities and most schools have clear improvements to be made before reaching the highest point. Likewise, learners who are eligible to receive free school meals are more likely to perform well in ERW than in other regions, but we acknowledge that the impact of poverty on attainment must be reduced substantially. Even where schools benchmark well, and where pupils' overall performance is good, the performance of pupils eligible to receive free school meals is, more often than not, low. There is variation between schools and within schools, and specifically targeted interventions show specific improvements this year, and additional work is already in the pipeline for 2015-16.

	2015	2014	2013	2012
GWE		57.1	56.0	53.2
ERW	*60.2	58.0	55.6	54.8
CSC		54.1	49.4	47.8
EAS		52.2	49	46.4

## Introduction

**“ERW is an alliance of 6 local authorities governed by a legally constituted joint committee. Its aim is to implement the agreed regional strategy and business plan to support school improvement. “**

The ERW Consortium was re-established following the release of the National Model for School Improvement (Welsh Government in February 2014). The National Model outlines the Welsh Government's vision of regional school improvement consortia. The Cabinet of each respective Local Authority within the Region has adopted the Legal Agreement in place for ERW's operation and governance.

The Consortium comprises of six Local Authorities: Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Powys, the County Borough of Neath Port Talbot and the City and County of Swansea. The purpose of ERW is to deliver a single consistent and integrated professional school improvement service for children and young people in a range of settings within the six Local Authorities.

ERW is governed by a legally constituted Joint Committee, with its membership made up of the six Local Authority Leaders.

ERW's vision is to ensure:

**“a consistently high performing school network across the region, with every school a good school offering high standards of teaching under good leadership, resulting in all learners achieving their maximum potential”**

In order to achieve this vision, we will build school capacity through support, challenge and intervention to become self-improving, resilient organisations which continually improve outcomes for learners.

ERW's mission is to:

**“build school capacity through support, challenge and intervention to become self-improving, resilient organisations which continually improve outcomes for learners”**

ERW's work will secure **effective performance in all schools** across the region by:

- **robustly and consistently challenging** the performance in schools and the outcomes achieved by **all** their learners
- deploying a differentiated system of **professional support to schools** in proportion to need that is identified through a nationally agreed assessment and categorisation framework
- supporting the deployment of national and regional strategies to develop the **literacy and numeracy and digital skills of learners** and to improve **outcomes for disadvantaged learners**
- facilitating and developing **effective school to school support** in order to improve performance and outcomes through the deployment of experienced and successful lead practitioners
- **managing and deploying well trained challenge advisers** across the region to challenge performance and signpost appropriate relevant support
- triggering **formal interventions in schools that fail to perform** to the required standard
- **building capacity and resilience within schools so that we will enable a self-improving system within the region**

### **Responding to recommendations**

- ERW welcomed the very useful verbal feedback by both Estyn and the WAO following the review, which enabled us to respond quickly and systematically. There were no surprise areas, and our self-evaluation had identified every development area.
- As a result, we had several improvement steps in place, and therefore, due to an early and prompt response, we were able to prioritise, accelerating the improvement process where necessary. In addition to this, we could **use the feedback by Estyn and the WAO to refine and improve our work.**

- **We also acknowledge that our strengths are many**, such as in strategic planning, scrutiny and accountability in the medium term. As a result, we were able to report effectively within ERW's governance structure that we had addressed any deficiencies.
- Inspection, audit and review bodies (IAR) have **systematically monitored and reported on the recommendations** through our short-term governance arrangements. However, all action in response to recommendations has by now been incorporated into our business planning.
- **Embedding actions within improvement planning** is best practice in effective business planning and self-evaluation. We have covered all the important recommendations in these, and where needed, have identified them on the risk register.
- A process of **highlighting and transferring progress** has led to the development of confidence, securing evident improvements. ERW's procedure for governance and accountability has ensured that progress is evident and is identified. However, the process of monitoring progress against the review findings is challenging as the fieldwork was completed almost a year ago, and we have since made substantial progress in infrastructure and practice.
- **Reviewing the impact of improvement and the impact of our responses to recommendations** has led to a measurable impact on learner outcomes. Improvement in monitoring and evaluation has led to improved support and challenge for schools which provide value for money.

### Principal recommendations

In prioritising the work, we focused on six priority areas as many recommendations are intertwined:

#### 1. *Self-evaluation*

This is a difficult and sensitive aspect of work to deliver perfectly. We are confident that we know ourselves well and that the range of information gathered to inform our procedure for self-evaluation is correct. We are confident that our annual cycle is well-informed by external evaluation held by inspection, audit and review bodies; and our own intelligence, i.e. performance data, scrutiny, a risk management system, reporting and monitoring procedures. We are continually refining this information, and cannot make sweeping statements as the region is so diverse and so large geographically. The balance of operational and strategic information is fair. We are confident in our ability to self-evaluate to secure improvement and to remove any unnecessary waste. Responding to feedback from schools is one of our strengths, and has led to improved findings and services.

#### 2. *Scrutiny and democratic accountability*

WAO feedback on our work here was very heartening and we have further strengthened our approach this year. Last year, we disaggregated performance data to each LA, whereas this year each LA will have a full regional picture. We have an established regional FWP for scrutiny. Tight safeguards are in place to secure ongoing local scrutiny of regional work. This year's FWP includes:  
performance data and categorisation; ERW BP; Challenge Advisers and their performance and capacity.

All recommendations are collated and shared regionally. All chairs meet regionally to share and plan, using the most effective practice.

So, to conclude, our work involves 3 key tasks: an effective infrastructure for regional scrutiny; quality assurance of challenge and scrutiny activity; and ensuring that the regional service responds to scrutiny feedback and takes action accordingly.

3. *Risk management*  
We acknowledged that this was an area for development, and therefore the NPT CBC Corporate Team has been leading on processes on ERW's behalf. Collating an effective and relevant risk register, and ensuring that it is updated and utilised across the 6 LAs has added value to our work and enabled us to share and mitigate risk by taking collaborative responsibility. The process of identifying financial and operational improvement in schools and strategic corporate risk for ERW and local authorities is complex. The previous reporting arrangements to JC and Exec were adequate, but the current arrangements for progress, based on best practice, are in place and are fully operational.
4. *Business planning*  
ERW's BP is in place. There is a clear focus on outcomes with three priority areas and 16 workstreams. Building on last year's success to align workstreams and priorities has secured stakeholder support as they are able to 'imagine' tasks that they can 'own'. The region's 6 Chief Education Officers are working carefully to dovetail and align operational planning in each LA to ERW. ERW's plan could be described as a backbone to all the plans, informing and bringing together the necessary actions and priorities across the region. The key to every partnership plan is joint ownership of outcomes and success criteria. This is set out in the plan and identified clearly.
5. *Value for money*  
ERW has guidelines in place to determine value for money. They are based on an overview of prudence, efficiency, added value, collaborative advantage and effectiveness. The guidance, monitoring and audit arrangements for the EIG are underway. Relationships between finance officers and even school bursars has been key to managing a very useful transition process to combine Welsh Government grants. The process of providing security between local authorities with regard to internal audits and for the Annual Governance Statement has been more effective this year as the structures and systems are fully established. ERW delegate rates for schools are high and reflect on the region's priority in supporting capacity and strength in schools.
6. *Effective use of data and intelligence*  
Information on our tracking procedures for schools and pupils is key to informing our work on further improvement. This aspect will inform the value for money work and is an integral part of our work to build on digital learning capacity to aid school improvement strategies. This is an area of strength for the region, and our pupil information is good. This is reflected in the outcomes for pupils and groups of vulnerable pupils. We anticipate developing strength and capacity through more effective work in this area.
7. *Quality support to schools*  
Schools are appropriately supported through ERW's Support School, and this fully reflects the national categorisation system. Schools are entitled to support, and this support is brokered according to need via a high standard comprehensive 'Support Menu'.

The standard of support to schools depends on our advisers. We have developed a strong temporary workforce of Challenge Advisers. A third are core employed local authority staff, a third are school leaders on secondment, and a third are advisory. Each one meets or exceeds the National Standards for Challenge Advisers and works within the ERW Code of Conduct. Ongoing development and professional learning are key, as expectations of advisers are high. We are currently targeting secondary advisers in particular with a series of master classes, and refining their work in order to reduce bureaucracy and to secure an affirmative impact on schools' own capacity to improve.



On a regional level, the work towards developing a self-improving schools system is proceeding. We are careful to manage expectations within a changing national climate, and to build a process of system transformation by enabling and supporting schools to become resilient, self-improving schools. However, we must also support underperforming schools, challenging effectively where required. This requires a system where a right to high standard support and challenge can co-exist within a self-improving system.

### **Supporting consortia and local authorities to overcome barriers to improvement**

As a region, we have often discussed with Welsh Government officers and the Minister for Education and Skills the range of strategies and support requirements needed to secure further improvement throughout Wales. Change in current systems and developments towards a self-improving system is being accelerated within ERW and is welcomed. However, the following challenges can lead to unnecessary frustrations:

- **Communication:** It is a continuous struggle to maintain the current nature and the usefulness of communication methods. Collaboration must be on a national level in order to relay consistent and valid messages.
- **Expectations:** The process of responding to change is affirmative, but realistic expectations and the delivery of resources in a timely manner can help schools, local authorities and consortia to be better prepared.
- **Reliability:** The reliability of professional opinions are core to developing a self-improving system, and one which is confident in this respect. The opinions of teachers when assessing, Challenge Advisers when categorising and the opinions of Estyn inspectors must be correct and consistent.
- **Strategy:** Setting and retaining a consistent and clear national strategy is an important tool in leading the sector. Our plans to manage and create effective regional systems are completely dependent on clear strategic direction from Welsh Government.
- **Effective financial planning and fair funding:** Recent changes to the Education Improvement Grant are welcomed, but the accountability process must be understood. There must be a consistent and fair method of funding deprivation and supporting best practice.
- **Addressing difficult issues:** Leaders must understand the roles and responsibilities within the system.

# Agenda Item 4



Gwasanaeth Effeithiolrwydd a  
Gwella Ysgolion Rhanbarthol Gogledd Cymru  
Regional School Effectiveness &  
Improvement Service for North Wales

## Report to:

# Children, Young People and Education Committee National Assembly for Wales

## September 2015

### Foreword

GwE, the fully bilingual regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales, works alongside and on behalf of the Local Authorities of Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Anglesey to develop excellent schools across the region and to improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring effective leadership at all levels and quality teaching and learning in all classrooms. By providing focused and supportive challenge and challenging support, GwE's fundamental objective is to develop a self-improving system which trusts schools and their leaders at every level to guide us on that journey. At best, close collaboration between schools can be extremely challenging and leads us to the realisation that perhaps what we perceived as being excellent practice is not in fact excellent. Schools need to improve themselves for the sake of the learners in their care; it is up to GwE to ensure that this happens.

### Governance

The Inter Authority Agreement between the six North Wales Authorities defines the governance arrangements for the GwE Joint Committee, including its Terms of Reference and Delegated Powers. In doing so it also identifies which matters are specifically reserved to the individual partner authorities to determine. The terms of reference and delegated powers of the Joint Committee are:

- i. to promote joint working in the delivery of the Service through:
- ii. facilitating constructive partnership working;
- iii. engaging with key interested bodies and stakeholders when appropriate; and
- iv. carrying out such other activities calculated to facilitate, or which are conducive to the successful delivery of the Service; and
- v. to oversee the management of the Service and ensure that the Service is provided and performs in accordance with the expectations of the Partner Authorities as reflected in the Full Business Case, Inter Authority Agreement and agreed Annual Business Plan;
- vi. to approve the budget for the Service on an annual basis;
- vii. to approve the business plan for the Service on an annual basis;
- viii. to monitor and manage the risks associated with the Service;
- ix. to ratify requests from the Service for additional budget funding from individual Councils;
- x. to approve the staff structure of the Service;
- xi. to appoint the Managing Director of the Service;
- xii. to decide on disciplinary action against the Managing Director; and
- xiii. where required, to determine or arrange for the determination of appeals in relation to Human Resources matters.

The following matters are specifically reserved for individual Cabinet decision:

- i. approval of inter-Council partnership governance arrangements;
- ii. increase of budget over agreed Council contributions;
- iii. procuring the necessary audit and assurance checks; and
- iv. termination of the Partnership.

## Vision

Our vision is to develop a world class system of education where every pupil within the region will be able to access consistently high quality teaching in all classrooms and where all schools, wherever their geographical location, will be led by excellent leaders. To achieve our vision, GwE will work with all stakeholders to robustly and effectively support, challenge and monitor performance at all levels and ensure that the categorisation framework is used consistently to target support in proportion to the need that is identified.

The national improvement plan, “Qualified for Life” is an indication of a commitment to the concept of a self-improving education system, and encapsulates the vision of school leaders working together, taking charge of their future and development. Whilst those within our schools must take responsibility for raising standards within their own establishments, GwE is trying to nurture a mentality of mutually celebrating the achievements of an entire system - ***“I want every school to be a good school, but I want my school to be that little bit better”.***

## Priority Outcomes

The priority outcomes identified in this document have been agreed by all 6 constituent local authorities and they reflect the region’s commitment to addressing national and local priorities. They will direct the work of GwE and demonstrate how we will implement the expectations of the National Model and the requirements of the North Wales Partnership Agreement. They also reflect the findings of the WAO/Estyn thematic reports, published in June 2015. There is a clear emphasis in our approach and methodology on developing a self-improving system where Challenge Advisors, LA Officers, leaders and schools will robustly support, challenge and share best practice. Rigorous quality assurance procedures will be applied to ensure effective delivery across and within the three geographical hubs.

## Delivering on Priority Outcomes

GwE will improve learner outcomes through:

- providing effective support and challenge to schools [through the deployment of Challenge Advisers, seconded Headteachers/SLT members, Associate Partners and expert practitioners]
- facilitating and promoting effective school to school partnership support
- delivering a training programme to promote and develop effective leadership, teaching and learning with particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills and the needs of learners from more deprived backgrounds
- collaborating with and supporting the LAs in triggering formal interventions in schools where performance does not meet the required standards

In order to do this, GwE will work towards a clear set of educational goals whilst also improving its internal organisational structures so that it is better able to offer sustainable support to schools across the region.

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## **Response to Estyn and Welsh Audit Office recommendations**

### **Overview**

- GwE's response to the recommendations of both reports are built into GwE's 3 year Business Plan and are identified as priorities for year 1
- It is recognised by Estyn and WAO that both reports present an early view of the progress of the arrangements to achieve school improvement through regional education consortia and that regional consortia have responded well to the feedback received and that some aspects of the findings are already being addressed

### **Response to specific recommendations**

*R1 (Estyn): Improve performance management arrangements*

*R3 (WAO): To develop more collaborative relationships for the school improvement system*

*R5 (WAO): To improve the effectiveness of governance and management of regional consortia*

- GwE has developed a new business plan to include 3 year milestones where detailed action steps, outcomes and costings are identified for each priority.
- The priorities identified in the Business Plan will be fed into a revised formal risk register and monitored by SLT, Management Board, Joint Committee and Advisory Board on a rotational basis.
- A new strategic approach has been agreed with Headteachers which will lead to greater autonomy and collaborative activity for our best schools
- GwE will continue to hone its self-evaluation processes to ensure more effective use of performance data.
- GwE is currently developing a more robust data management system to facilitate more effective management and analysis of data across schools.
- GwE is promoting a more effective tracking system at regional and local level.
- Targets and progress data from all schools will be thoroughly monitored during the school year. Stage 1 will be macro level data. Individual Challenge Advisers will be privy to pupil level data and tracking.
- All Performance Management objectives will be closely aligned with Business Plan priorities.
- Line management and accountability structures have been re-aligned.
- All CA's will have objectives which are aligned with quantitative improvement targets for link schools.
- Clear structures and guidelines for performance management of staff are in place, and a cycle of bespoke training to support improvement and consistency has been developed.

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- Paired working/shadowing between Challenge Advisers is now operational.
  - Capability procedures have been agreed and training provided for SLT.

*R2 (Estyn): Secure greater consistency in the quality of Challenge Advisers' evaluations of schools, particularly in relation to teaching and leadership*

- GwE is developing robust structures to ensure consistency.
- Challenge Advisers' reports are scrutinized through hub line management arrangements and SLT and regional team meetings.
- Good practice is shared within and across hubs.
- All reports can be accessed by all Challenge Advisers, with excellent practice tagged.
- Training and development programme is in place for all Challenge Advisers.
- Categorisation: GwE is delivering a training programme to ensure alignment with national expectations and cross-hub consistency of approach
- Expectations that relevant experience of high level management is key to all appointments.
- Identification of 3 key areas as basis for lead portfolio role for Challenge Advisers [Teaching & Learning; Leadership; Assessment and Tracking]

*R3 (Estyn): Develop clearer strategies to address the impact of deprivation upon education outcomes and ensure that all actions are coherent in this purpose*

- Strategic lead has been identified and regional strategy drafted (copy shared with WG)
- Priorities and key actions have been identified.
- Regional plan for supporting LAC has been developed, approved by WG and implemented by lead officer.
- Initial identification of Co-Leading Schools (CLS) for reducing the impact of poverty is complete.
- National Conference on the Impact of Deprivation has been arranged by GwE for the 9<sup>th</sup> November. The minister has been invited.
- Challenge Advisors have received training on successful strategies for addressing impact of deprivation on standards.
- Tackling deprivation is included as a standard item for SLT meetings

*R4 (Estyn): Improve the quality and range of support to schools (school to school strategies)*

*R4 (WAO): To build effective leadership and attract top talent*

- Agreed overarching strategy is now in place.
- Cross sector and cross authority programmes are being facilitated [including links with HE and local businesses] and shared at regional conference.
- Agreed Co-leading Schools Strategy [rolled out from summer 2015].
- Co-construction with WG to identify Successful Futures Pioneer schools and New Deal Pioneer schools.
- Revised GwE model for supporting/challenging schools will further promote the development of a self-improving school system.
- Leadership Development Programme operational.

*R4 (Estyn): Improve the quality and range of support to schools (non-core subjects)*

- GwE development programme is being rolled out to improve the leading of teaching and learning which will provide impact in core and non-core subjects.
- School to school working is being developed through these programmes.
- The co-leading schools model will underpin the development of non-core subject support.
- The development of Green and Yellow schools providing mutual support and challenge will assist with underpinning the work needed across non-core subjects.
- GwE is developing an index of effective practice across the region, and will in due course include all subjects. In due course, GwE will secure a quality assurance system and include schools in the index.

*R5 (Estyn): Include diocesan authorities effectively in the strategic planning and evaluation of regional services*

- Estyn report acknowledges that GwE was the only region already actively engaging the diocesan authorities.
- During the establishment of GwE, diocesan representatives from Wrexham, St Asaph and Bangor were key stakeholders and consulted at various stages.
- Governance Structure includes diocesan representative as co-opted member of Joint Committee [serving for maximum term of 2 years] .

*R6 (Estyn): Local authorities should support their regional consortium to develop medium-term business plans and ensure that all plans take account of the needs of their local schools*

- GwE Business Plan will include 3 year milestones and each section will include clear references to delivery required in each LA (in addition to any GwE core provision)

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*R7 (Estyn): Local authorities should develop formal working arrangements between scrutiny committees in their consortium in order to scrutinise the work and impact of their regional consortium.*

*R1 (WAO): To clarify the nature and operation of consortia*

*R5 (WAO): To improve the effectiveness of governance and management of regional consortia*

- GwE Advisory Board has been established and is operational.
- There is a need to further hone role of the GwE Joint Committee which includes active representation from each of the partner authorities.
- Agree rolling scrutiny programme for LA/Joint Committee.
- Ensure robust challenge for GwE senior staff in scrutiny meetings.
- Ensure User Group provides both support and challenge to GwE senior staff.
- The North Wales local authorities have now clarified that GwE is a jointly provided service and not a commissioned service.

GwE and the six local authorities in North Wales now look forward to implementing in full the recommendations of the two reports and are aware that a further, detailed Estyn inspection on a yet to be published framework is likely during the spring or summer terms of 2016. This inspection will doubtlessly consider GwE's progress towards delivering the recommendation of the two reports referred to in this paper.

**Huw Foster Evans**

Managing Director GwE  
September 2015

# Agenda Item 5.1



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 Tŷ Diane Engelhardt, Uned 2, Llys Treglown, Heol Dowlais, Caerdydd CF24 5LQ  
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08 September 2015

Dear Colleague

- (i) ChildLine Annual Review to be published on Thursday 10 September**
- (ii) Tackling on-line safety: partnership announced between 02 and NSPCC**

I am writing to brief you on two initiatives that the NSPCC is undertaking and which I hope will be of interest to you. If you have any queries arising out of this briefing or observations that you would like to make, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### ***Always there when I need you: ChildLine Annual Review 2014/15***

The NSPCC will be publishing the Annual Review of ChildLine's helpline activity covering the period 2014/15. The review reports that in 2014/15 there were nearly 290,000 ChildLine counselling sessions with children and young people about issues affecting them. Looking at what they contact us about can help us to build up a picture of their lives and the nature of the problems they face.

The top ten reasons which children and young people contacted ChildLine were

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Family Relationships        | 6. Friendship issues                       |
| 2. Low self esteem/unhappiness | 7. Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health |
| 3. Bullying/online bullying    | 8. School/education problems               |
| 4. Self harm                   | 9. Mental health/depressive disorders      |
| 5. Suicidal                    | 10. Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse.  |

The review provides an analysis of the numbers of children and young people counselled by ChildLine, their characteristics, and trends over recent years.

*Always there when I need you* focuses on mental health and wellbeing concerns. As can be seen from the listing, above, four of the top ten reasons for contacting ChildLine relate to mental health. But abuse remains a priority issue for children and young people to contact ChildLine. Last year over 26,000 children and young people contacted us with concerns about sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect.

ChildLine found that, worryingly many young people felt they received little help and were unable to get the vital help they needed.

**MAE POB PLENTYNDOD WERTH BRWYDRO DROSTO**  
**EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR**



From Thursday 10 September, you can read the ChildLine annual review, *Always there when I need you*, on the NSPCC website, [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk). We are media releasing this story and so would be grateful if you would respect the embargo until Thursday.

### **Tackling on-line safety: partnership announced between O2 and NSPCC**

We also want to brief you on the recently announced O2 and NSPCC partnership to tackle on-line safety. O2 and the NSPCC recognise the many educational and communication benefits of the internet. We also understand that parents and carers often need help, advice and support to keep their children safe in the face of risks posed by the "online world." The partnership between O2 and the NSPCC seeks to ensure that parents have access to practical advice and support to help keep their children stay safe online. We are providing one-on-one free expert technical advice to parents via a dedicated new helpline (0808 800 5002), as well as interactive workshops delivered in workplaces and schools.

Full details of the partnership are available on the NSPCC website ([www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)) and on [www.O2.co.uk/nspcc](http://www.O2.co.uk/nspcc).

### **Can you help promote these initiatives?**

We would, of course, welcome your feedback on both these initiatives, and also your support. If you have any comments please do not hesitate to contact us. If you have a newsletter or regular briefing and would like a short article we would be happy to provide assistance. Finally, we would be pleased, as far as is practicable, to provide a speaker to any meeting or committee you consider appropriate.

Yours sincerely



Des Mannion  
National Head of Service for NSPCC Wales/Cymru

**MAE POB PLENTYNDOD WERTH BRWYDRO DROSTO**  
**EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR**

## Welsh Government Budget 2016-17

### Universities Wales Briefing Note

This is a short briefing note on Universities Wales' current assessment of, and recommendations for, the Welsh government's higher education budget 2016-17.

From the outset we would like to state that we recognise the need for and support Sir Ian Diamond's current Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales. The ability of the higher education system to deliver the kind of higher education opportunities that are needed for Wales under the current funding and student finance arrangements is of great concern, and long-term policy changes will be required for future success. The purpose of this briefing paper however, is to outline the short-term requirements for the sector which we believe need immediate consideration in the preparation of the government's 2016-17 budget. These requirements are crucial to sustaining current short-term delivery for Wales until policies to address the longer-term sustainability of the sector can be implemented.

Universities in Wales are national assets that bring widespread benefits to individuals, communities, the nation as a whole and government in Wales. It is crucial that the required short-term commitments are made, so that Universities in Wales continue:

1. **Delivering for the Welsh economy** - the total combined impact on Wales' Gross Value Added (GVA) of Welsh universities and their students came to nearly £2.4 billion - equivalent to 4.6% of all 2013 Wales GVA<sup>1</sup>.
2. **Providing the skills required** for Wales's skills base to grow - The UK Commission for Employment and Skills<sup>2</sup> estimates there will be 7.8 million additional high-skilled jobs between 2012-2022, requiring a high concentration of graduates, and employers are reporting a predicted 11.9% rise in graduate vacancies this year, following an increase of 4.3% last year<sup>3</sup>.
3. **Creating fair opportunities** - Universities are a catalyst for social mobility and continue to invest heavily in ensuring that students, regardless of background, have access to good quality higher education that has the ability to change lives. Welsh universities continue to have a higher proportion of students from the most under-represented groups (including mature students and students from low participation neighbourhoods and in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance) compared to the UK as a whole<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Early findings from The Economic Impact of Higher Education in Wales 2015 Report for Universities Wales. To be published September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> 'Working Futures 2012-2022'. UKCES Evidence Report 83, March 2014

<sup>3</sup> The Association of Graduate Recruiters' (AGR) 2015 survey

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/about\\_he\\_in\\_wales/statistics/uk\\_performance\\_indicators.aspx](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/about_he_in_wales/statistics/uk_performance_indicators.aspx)

## Universities Wales priorities for the Welsh Government's Budget 2016-17

The higher education budget in Wales has already been reduced disproportionately between 2010/11 and 2015/16, seeing a reduction of 20% against a fall of only 2% in the Welsh Government's total allocations. Even when including fee grant payments, the higher education allocation has gone from comprising 3.1% of the departmental expenditure limits to 2.6%. This puts the cuts to public funding for universities in Wales as among the largest in Europe, with the current gap in funding between Wales and England at -£64m (when scaled based on a comparison of population size as used in the Barnett formula)<sup>5</sup>. We fully recognise that the Welsh Government will have challenging decisions to make about where to prioritise its funding, and have therefore identified in the following the absolute minimum needed for our universities to be able to provide the benefits above in the short-term. We believe that this is crucial to delivering the government's aim for jobs and growth whilst delivering social justice for the people of Wales.

- **Maintain current levels of grant funding to HEFCW for universities for two years** until policies for longer-term sustainability can be implemented following the Diamond review recommendations. This will provide the short-term stability needed by universities in Wales to continue to deliver the social and economic benefits that are vital to the people of Wales.
- **Ring-fence the Quality Research (QR) budget** to sustain the sector's reputation for research excellence and provide the crucial underpinning needed to win a greater share of competitively awarded research funding that, match funded with government, will achieve the economic, social and cultural goals to benefit Wales.
- **Prevent further cuts to part-time provision** by protecting the current level of funding. This will address the urgent need for greater parity in terms of funding and student support arrangements for part-time students as this makes a vitally important contribution to improving widening access and to strengthening employment skills for people of all ages and backgrounds in Wales.
- **Protect the expensive subjects premium** to ensure Welsh universities are able to offer a comprehensive range of subjects to meet the skills requirements for Wales, widen opportunities to students in Wales and attract students from outside Wales, whilst also providing world-class teaching and a first class student experience.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on our early analysis of data from hefce ([www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/govletter/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/govletter/)) and hefcw (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/201505/>)

## Why are these funding requirements so critical for Wales?

### Maintaining grant funding

Welsh Government's higher education funding, provided to universities through HEFCW grant funding, has reduced from £395 million in 2010/11 to £154 million in 2015/16. This decrease has come about as more money is paid to universities via the fee grant – offered to students from Wales by Welsh government since the change in tuition fee policy in 2012/13. However, universities and crucially students and the wider population of Wales, are being adversely affected by these changes because the money previously provided through **grant funding is not equivalent to income from fee grants**. This is because:

- a) The overall income to universities from fee grants is £10.6m less than funding previously received from grant funding<sup>6</sup>. This has put Welsh universities' ability to act in the public interest and provide positive sector-level interventions at risk. Universities in Wales have made significant efficiency savings, notably higher than English institutions<sup>7</sup>. However, an overall reduction in funding has placed additional pressure on already stretched budgets and the inevitable consequence is that universities are placed in the invidious position of having to make cost reductions that run the risk of impacting on students. **Grant funding needs to be maintained at current levels to prevent any further cuts that will affect students.**
  
- b) Universities are **less able to distribute their income to help those that need it most**. University income is now largely derived from full-time undergraduate (FTUG) fees. These students quite rightly expect value for money for their tuition fees, however this expectation to spend all tuition fee income on teaching for FTUGs affects a university's ability to use that income to support the full range of students. For example, funding that previously supported the most vulnerable students - access and retention premiums - has been cut from grant funding and is expected to be funded by income from all students' fee income<sup>8</sup>. This is compounded by the government's decision to remove capital funding in 2012. Universities now need to borrow to support capital investment. They therefore also need to be able to use their income to cover the cost of any borrowing and also provide themselves with a cushion against any variation in income and cash-flow fluctuations (e.g. due to the profile of payments from the Student Loans Company). **Grant funding needs to be maintained at current levels to give universities the flexibility of income to deliver public benefits in addition to providing world-class teaching to FTUGs and capital investment to improve students' experience in Wales.**

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<sup>6</sup> Income to universities in Wales from grant funding and fee grant increased cumulatively by 2.6% between 2011/12 and 2013/14. This equates to a real terms – adjusted for inflation - drop of 2.7%.

<sup>7</sup> Reported efficiency savings by the Welsh sector were higher in 2013/14 than the English sector (£18.6m compared to £13.6m prorated). Based on analysis of data in UUK's Efficiency, effectiveness and value for money Report 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Access and retention premiums fell from £15m in 2012/13 to £5m by 2015/6. HEFCW Circular W15/09HE, HEFCW's Funding Allocations 2015/16.

- c) The funding shift has seen a redistribution of income, with some institutions now significantly worse off than before 2012 (one saw a decrease in income of 49% and two other in the region of 25% in real terms from 2011/12 to 2012/13) while others have managed to maintain their position. Without the stability of income from grant funding this **polarisation makes it difficult for some individual universities in Wales to manage risk**. With only nine universities in Wales, the reputation of one university can affect the whole sector. Therefore, in order to retain and build the positive reputation Wales' universities have with both business and students, government policies need to be mindful of the needs of the local communities and economies that rely on individual universities. **Sustaining the current levels of grant funding therefore, will maintain an institution's ability to manage their own affairs and continue to deliver the economic and social benefits to Wales** that are demonstrated above.
- d) **The instability of university income due to the funding shift poses a great short-term risk**. Fee grant income is brought into universities through recruitment of full-time undergraduates and this effective shift from public to private income means universities are impacted by changes in student behaviour. Student numbers are volatile, fluctuating every year and heavily influenced by policy changes that are outside a university's control such as the lifting of the student numbers cap in England. While these policies need addressing in the longer-term (which will be covered in the Diamond review), **grant funding needs to be maintained in the short-term so that universities can put in measures to ensure they are able to recruit**. Recruitment depends on universities being able to provide a student experience that is competitive with universities in the rest of the UK and indeed increasingly, Europe. Student recruitment has already been impacted in Wales through the effect of underinvestment on league table performance, according to a recent report that shows one of the main reasons why Welsh universities may not fare well on public facing rankings is that Welsh universities were significantly underfunded compared with those in England and Scotland over the previous decade<sup>9</sup>. It is therefore crucial that in the short-term, **grant funding must be maintained to help universities continue to attract students, and therefore receive the income that will allow them to deliver great benefits to students, communities and the economy in Wales**.

#### Ring-fence Quality Research (QR) funding

Wales' university research base is a great national asset, vital to the future of Wales through its economic and social impact. In fact Welsh universities have the highest percentage of 'world leading' research in terms of its impact of any part of the UK, with almost half of it considered to be having a transformational effect on society and the economy. These results

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<sup>9</sup> Learned Society of Wales, 2011. The regional analysis of the Complete University League Table from this report is included in the appendix and demonstrates the direct correlation between underfunding and league table performance.

from the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) vividly illustrate the impressive work of universities in Wales in exceeding the performance of other countries in the UK despite lower levels of funding in comparison: Wales' proportion of total UK research funding dropped from 4.3% in 2007/08 to 3.9% in 2012/13 and even recently, despite the latest cuts to higher education funding in England, the 2015/16 funding allocation for research in England is still ring-fenced and, scaled on the basis of relative population size<sup>10</sup>, £7m more than Wales.

We support Welsh Government's vision to expand excellent research in Wales' universities through strengthening the quality and quantity of the research base, to achieve economic, social and cultural goals to benefit Wales. Following the 2014 REF, the sector in Wales has maximised efficiency by directing QR funding to support research of the highest quality, which can be expected to produce the greatest returns on investment. Clearly a future higher education sector furnished with increased and comparable research capacity and funding would be able to deliver even more for Wales, however, the **short-term priorities for the sector in the 2016-17 budget are:**

- a) QR funding is a crucial component in the aim shared by universities and government in Wales to win a greater share of competitively awarded research funding, as it underpins universities' ability to compete. Research in Wales is currently funded via a dual support system that operates throughout the UK with QR funding from HEFCW designed specifically to provide support to universities in Wales for research infrastructure, giving them the flexibility to determine the strategic direction of their research. On the other side of the dual support system, grants for specific projects and programmes are provided by the Research Councils, charities, the EU and government departments. Any cuts to QR funding would further hinder Welsh universities' capacity to compete with other universities that are receiving greater investment. It would also create the risk that blue skies research is stifled by a shift to project based research funding due to the time pressures on institutions in constant bidding exercises. **The QR budget must be maintained to provide this crucial support that will enable the research base, and in turn the beneficial impact on Wales, to grow.**
- b) Excellent academic staff are also critical to Wales' success in the REF and future ability to win competitively awarded research funding. Top academics not only bring their expertise to a university but also a vital network and invaluable reputation, both of which are crucial to building a university's research base. The risk of losing these people and the benefits they would take with them has serious consequences on the ability of the sector to perform in the future, demonstrating that short-term decisions about research funding must be made with the longer-term vision in mind. A recent UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education report showed the main reason why Wales did not secure its standard share of Research Council funding over the past 20 years, was not due to poor performance, but a historical and significant shortfall of

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<sup>10</sup> This is in line with the method used to determine Barnett consequentials for Wales

academic researchers working in specific subjects in Wales. It is crucial that **QR funding is ring-fenced to provide this fundamental underpinning to the research base, which in turn will provide confidence for those that work with them and the academics crucial to their future success.**

- c) As outlined above, now that the bulk of university income is derived from full-time undergraduate (FTUG) fees, the expectation to spend all this income on teaching for full-time undergraduates affects an institutions' ability to use that income to support a full range of activities as well as students. Therefore, the capacity for institutions to vire from FTUG fee income to support research is limited, risking their ability to remain competitive. **QR funding needs ring-fencing to give universities the certainty of income to sustain the sector's reputation for research excellence without compromising their ability to provide world-class teaching to FTUGs in Wales.**

#### Prevent further cuts to part-time provision

Part-time study makes a vitally important contribution to improving widening access and to strengthening employment skills for people of all ages and backgrounds in Wales, and consequently delivering great social and economic benefits. However, delivering part-time higher education, at the level of quality learners should expect, requires financial support from university income **in addition** to grant and fees in many cases. Having already seen cuts to part-time allocations (at £3.8m, the bulk of funding reductions for 2015/16 were seen in part-time UG funding), **it is crucial that further cuts are not made in the 2016-17 budget** in order to address the urgent need for greater parity in terms of funding and student support arrangements for part-time students and prevent the knock-on effects on communities and local economies in Wales.

#### Prevent further cuts to the expensive subjects premium (ESP)

Despite recent tuition fee rises, the fees do not cover the total cost of delivering some 'higher-cost' subjects (medical/dentistry, laboratory based STEM and conservatoire provision) at most Welsh universities. Clearly this means cross-subsidisation between lower-cost and higher-cost areas of teaching and between teaching and research, is essential for universities to generate a sufficient overall margin to underpin investment in the student experience and infrastructure. However, the shift to income derived from tuition fees means students' expectations limits universities' ability to distribute their income. In 2014/15 the funding for expensive and priority subjects was reduced from £43m to £15m. **Funding for expensive subjects must be preserved if we are to meet the skills requirements of employers in Wales, and give universities the flexibility of income to be able to offer a wide range of subjects.** This is needed to both widen the opportunities for student in Wales and attract students from outside Wales, whilst also providing world-class teaching and a first class student experience.

Universities Wales is also keen to continue the dialogue with the Welsh Government on potential options for a postgraduate loan scheme for Wales. Following the UK Government announcement of a postgraduate loans scheme for taught masters (PGT) in the 2014 Autumn Statement<sup>11</sup>, further consideration of the consequences of this policy decision for Wales is urgently required. Welsh universities' ability to attract the postgraduates that are critical to providing higher level skills for world-leading businesses and economic growth in Wales is at serious risk if this new policy applies only in England for English students, thereby preventing English domiciled students from taking their loans and bursary provision across the border into Wales' universities.

Wales' Universities are national assets that are bringing great benefits to the Welsh economy and providing fair opportunities and the skills needed to achieve economic, social and cultural goals to benefit Wales. We support the government's vision to see the Welsh language thriving in Wales. Further discussions with government will need to take place around the future funding of Welsh medium provision in Wales to achieve this vision. However, this paper has set out the four critical requirements for the Welsh government's 2016-17 budget, that universities in Wales consider necessary for them to continue delivering these benefits. Maintaining grant funding, ring-fencing quality research funding and preventing cuts to both part-time undergraduate provision and the expensive subject premium are all critical to preventing any negative impacts on the people of Wales until policies to address the longer-term sustainability of the sector can be implemented.

**Universities Wales**  
**August 2015**

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<sup>11</sup> Postgraduate loans scheme for taught masters of up to £10k from 2016/17 for English domiciled students, and a bursary scheme put in place for £50m (with matched funding £100m) for 2015/16. See <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07049>



## Appendix

The regional analysis of the Complete University League Table below confirms the cumulative effects of the funding gap between Wales and other UK regions in terms of facilities spend, academic services and tariff score.

**Table 5: Comparative data on HEIs by Nation/ Region from the Complete University League Table (2014)**

<b>Nation / Region</b> (number of HEIs included in the study)	<b>Entry standards</b> <sup>A</sup>	<b>Staff student Ratio</b> <sup>B</sup>	<b>Academic services</b> <sup>C</sup>	<b>Facilities Spend</b> <sup>D</sup>
<b>Wales (7)</b>	325	18.3	926	388
<b>Northern Ireland (2)</b>	350	17.3	1062	551
<b>Scotland (14)</b>	403	17.7	1151	410
<b>North East England (5)</b>	387	17.2	1118	537

<sup>A</sup> The average UCAS tariff score of new students. The results are then adjusted to take account of the subject mix at the university.  
<sup>B</sup> A measure of the average staffing level in the university; Calculated using HESA data for 2012–13.  
<sup>C</sup> The expenditure per student on all academic services using HESA data for 2010–11, 2011–12, and 2012–13.  
<sup>D</sup> The expenditure per student on staff and student facilities using HESA data for 2010–11, 2011–12, and 2012–13.

# Agenda Item 7

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

Document is Restricted