

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 30 September 2015

Meeting time: 09.15

For further information contact:

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Committee Clerk

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09.15 – 09.30 – Private pre-meeting

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

(09.30)

2 Ministerial update on Regional Education Consortia

(09.30 – 10.30)

(Pages 1 – 48)

Welsh Government

CYPE(4)-23-15 – Paper 1

Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills

Jo-Anne Daniels, Director – Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and
Learner Support Directorate

Brett Pugh, Director – School Standards and Workforce Directorate

Steve Vincent, Deputy Director – Schools Management and Effectiveness
Division

3 Ministerial update on the Donaldson Review

(10.30 – 11.30)

Welsh Government



Huw Lewis AM – Minister for Education and Skills

Jo-Anne Daniels, Director – Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and
Learner Support Directorate

Brett Pugh, Director – School Standards and Workforce Directorate

Steve Vincent, Deputy Director – Schools Management and Effectiveness
Division

**4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the
public from the meeting for the remainder of the meeting:**

(11.30)

**5 Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) – Consideration of
draft report**

(11.30 – 12.00)

(Pages 49 – 88)

CYPE(4)-22-15 – Private paper 2

Document is Restricted



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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**Response to Estyn thematic review on
improving schools through
regional education consortia**

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Report title:**Improving schools through regional education consortia****Report details**

The purpose of this survey is to report on the progress being made by regional education consortia in providing school improvement services.

Separately, the Auditor General for Wales asked Wales Audit Office to carry out a study on the Welsh Government's approach to improving schools through regional consortia. Wales Audit Office will report to the Public Accounts Committee at the National Assembly for Wales.

Estyn and Wales Audit Office carried out fieldwork visits to each regional consortium in partnership and evidence was shared between the two organisations.

These visits took place between November 2014 and January 2015. The survey also involved scrutiny of a wide range of evidence from schools, local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional consortia and the Welsh Government.

Summary of main findings.

Although the general improvements in standards of pupil attainment over the past three years cannot be solely attributed to the development of regional consortia, the published data reflects a gradual improvement across all four regions. Performance is consistently higher in GWE and ERW than CSC and EAS. School inspection outcomes are broadly similar across the four regions, although there is a higher proportion of schools causing concern in the EAS and ERW has a higher number of schools that require follow up after their inspection that have not made enough progress.

The consortia have been slow to fully implement the governance arrangements in line with the National Model for Regional Working and it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the arrangements, senior leadership and management of consortia. Business plans for 2014-15 focus on the most important areas for improvement, although all of the plans have weaknesses in them. While there are examples of robust scrutiny by elected members of how a regional consortium is working with individual schools, scrutiny committees do not hold their senior officers and representatives to account well enough.

Self evaluation reports are in the main overly positive, and identify strengths more accurately than shortcomings. Most of the regional consortia have

engaged effectively with LA officers, school leaders and trade unions in developing regional priorities and policies for school improvement, however, none of the consortia have engaged enough with diocesan authorities. Quality assurance arrangements for challenge advisers have been strengthened and there is consistency in the work of challenge advisers, although arrangements are not always implemented rigorously enough.

The EAS and CSC have more than twice as many schools involved in the Schools Challenge Cymru programme as the other regions and there is a lack of clarity around working relationships with schools and how consortia will evaluate their role in improvements. Consortia have not monitored closely enough how well schools are using the PDG and none of the regions have a coherent strategic approach to reducing the impact of deprivation on attainment.

There are suitable arrangements in place with LAs for sharing information for many service areas although none of the consortia have a developed system to collate, analyse and share information about the progress of pupils and schools. Consortia generally know how well many of their schools are performing through the work of challenge advisers, but challenge advisers are not always diagnostic enough in understanding why a school is performing well or not and are not always involved enough in moderating teacher assessment.

Overall, regional consortia are better at challenging schools about their current performance than supporting them to improve. However, the consortia are developing strategies to facilitate schools to support each other, although only CSC involves all schools in their strategy. Consortia provide appropriate information to LAs about schools causing concern. Once an LA issues a statutory warning notice to improve a school, the regional consortium usually works well with both the school and the LA to agree a suitable plan and monitor progress.

Recommendation 1-5

Regional consortia should:

R1 Improve performance management arrangements by:

- planning for the medium term to ensure a strategic approach to school improvement
- ensuring that plans contain actions that are specific and measurable, with appropriate targets, costings and milestones for delivery
- capturing, sharing and using data (from pupil level up) efficiently and effectively

- monitoring the progress of pupils and schools regularly
- taking a more robust approach to identifying and managing risks
- realistically self-evaluating their strengths and shortcomings
- tightly managing the individual performance of their staff

R2 Secure greater consistency in the quality of challenge advisers' evaluations of schools, particularly in relation to teaching and leadership

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

R4 Improve the quality and range of support for schools and in particular:

- develop clearer strategies for maximising the potential of school-to-school support
- provide or broker better support for teaching and learning in non-core subject areas

R5 Involve diocesan authorities effectively in the strategic planning and evaluation of regional services

Welsh Government response

These recommendations are for consortia and we agree with their content.

We will discuss the report and its findings with the sector at the next ADEW Directors' meeting and hold further detailed discussions on the recommendations directly with key consortia personnel, (along with the ADEW lead director and the lead chief executive), in each consortium at the upcoming Summer review and Challenge events which are scheduled to take place during June and July 2015.

Via these discussions we will ensure that the consortia are addressing the recommendations made but also working consistently across Wales on the issues.

In addition, policy leads within DfES are also working with consortia to ensure that other issues raised in these recommendations are in the process of being addressed. For example, in respect of strategies to address deprivation each consortia has taken different approaches to supporting schools to tackle the impact of poverty on educational attainment. The consortia have acknowledged the need to develop the skills of their staff and/or challenge advisers. To facilitate this Welsh Government granted each consortium £50k to build capacity towards the end of 2014-15.

Furthermore, the new approach to business planning (which requires the consortia to submit headline plans, including one on tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment), will encourage a more coherent approach to strategic planning and this year, in response to feedback that its headline plan lacked detail, GWE forwarded its draft tackling deprivation strategy. At least two of the consortia have recruited a Closing the Gap co-ordinator. The consortia are also now required to submit a Pupil Deprivation Grant Support Plan, which outlines how they will support schools to make effective use of the PDG, and what action they will take, including recovering monies, where it is clear that the grant is not being used for its intended purpose.

Through the New Deal for the Education Workforce, Welsh Government will work in close collaboration with the consortia on the development of a wide range of professional learning provision that will be delivered through a pioneer schools network. This approach will actively facilitate an increase in school to school collaboration.

Recommendation 6-7

Local authorities should:

R6 Support their regional consortium to develop medium-term business plans and ensure that all plans take account of the needs of their local schools

R7 Develop formal working arrangements between scrutiny committees in their consortium in order to scrutinise the work and impact of their regional consortium

Welsh Government response

These recommendations are for Local Authorities and we agree with their content.

As outlined above we will discuss the report with ADEW lead directors and ensure that the WG supports LAs and consortia in addressing these recommendations.

Recommendation 8-13

The Welsh Government should:

R8 Improve its strategy to develop senior leaders and managers for education at local authority and regional consortia level

R9 Work more collaboratively with consortia and local authorities to agree

short and medium-term business plans and reduce requests to change and add to plans mid-year

R10 Ensure that school categorisation is rigorously moderated across the consortia

R11 Develop an agreed understanding between teachers, schools, local authorities, regional consortia and Welsh Government about the purpose and use of attainment targets

R12 Engage more effectively with diocesan authorities in developing its strategy for school improvement

R13 Ensure that consortia, local authorities and diocesan authorities are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities for schools in the Schools Challenge Cymru programme

Welsh Government response

These recommendations are for the Welsh Government and we accept them all.

We will work with the consortia and their constituent local authorities to address these recommendations.

As mentioned we have moved this year to streamlining consortia business planning in to headline business plans covering a one year period which provides a focus on addressing and support key priorities. We are in the process of holding discussions with consortia lead chief executives, lead Directors and Managing Directors to move to a three year planning cycle, this will support the development of longer term targets and sustainability. We will also further develop the Education Improvement grant to support longer term planning.

We have worked with the consortia via the ADEW Quality Standards group to review and further develop the categorisation moderation and verification process. As a result, guidance will be updated and strengthened to ensure consistency across the regions. All Wales moderation will also be undertaken.

Following the development of the National Model WG officials have had some discussion with the diocesan bodies in respect of their engagement with the National Model. We will accelerate this work and ensure that there is clarity between ADEW, WG and the Diocesan authorities in regard to school improvement.

Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) builds on the National Model for Regional Working, and is an acceleration and concentration of the school improvement strategy. The programme formally rolled out in schools in September 2014 and Welsh Government worked closely with and through the regional consortia to establish roles and responsibilities. As the programme has developed, reporting routines have become more embedded. We will continue to work with stakeholders to improve and refine, where necessary.

The SCC programme established an Accelerated improvement Board (AIB) for each Pathways to Success school. The AIB brings together all key stakeholders to monitor progress, provide challenge, and hold the school and its leadership to account. The membership of this Board includes the headteacher, chair of governors, a representative of the local authority, a headteacher of a cluster primary and the SCC adviser. The AIB model has been widely welcomed and early indications are that it is an effective mechanism to drive improvement in the school. A number of local authorities and consortia have adopted this model for schools that are causing concern in their areas.

Publication details

The report will be published on or after **3rd June 2015** and may be accessed on Estyn's website www.estyn.gov.uk

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

**WRITTEN EVIDENCE PAPER TO THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND
EDUCATION COMMITTEE:
REGIONAL EDUCATION CONSORTIA AND AN UPDATE ON THE
DONALDSON REVIEW**

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out written evidence on the Regional Education Consortia and to provide an update on *Successful Futures* the Donaldson Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales for the Children, Young People and Education Committee of the National Assembly for Wales.
2. The Welsh Government is fully committed to securing excellence throughout the education system in Wales, as set out in *Qualified for Life*. Underpinning one of the most ambitious and radical programmes of educational reform in our history are our four strategic objectives:
 - a. An excellent professional workforce with strong pedagogy based on an understanding of what works.
 - b. A curriculum which is engaging and attractive to children and young people and which develops within them an independent ability to apply knowledge and skills.
 - c. The qualifications young people achieve are nationally and internationally respected and act as a credible passport to their future learning and employment.
 - d. Leaders of education at every level working together in a self-improving system, providing mutual support and challenge to raise standards in all schools.
3. The recommendations set out in *Successful Futures*, the review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers*, the review of Initial Teacher Education and Training, and the commitment to the "New Deal" for the workforce, provide the foundations to achieve these objectives. As we progress, we will be supported by the regional consortia, Estyn and a wide range of stakeholders.

An update on Successful Futures

4. *Successful Futures* sets out 68 recommendations for Welsh Government and they have been accepted in full. This provides us with the foundations for a curriculum shaped by the very latest, international thinking, which will equip young people with the skills necessary to succeed in life.
5. We are now in the process of building a curriculum that supports our children and young people to be:

- Ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives;
 - Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
 - Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
 - Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.
6. We have already made progress. *Successful Futures* highlighted that digital competence is of paramount importance to a young person's life chances and we have accepted that digital competence should be a cross-curriculum responsibility in line with literacy and numeracy. This is something the Welsh Government strongly agrees with. Digital Pioneer Schools have been identified and they have already started working together.
 7. In relation to the wider pioneer model, we have invited consortia to work with their schools across Wales, including primary, secondary and special schools to apply to be Curriculum and New Deal Pioneer Schools. These Pioneer Schools will work with experts to lead on shaping the future of learning in Wales. Teaching professionals must play a central part in the design and development of our new curriculum and I am confident they are both willing and able to take on this challenge.
 8. We are clear that the profession needs to be supported to provide good quality teaching that delivers expected outcomes of learning for children and young people. The New Deal for the Education Workforce has been developed with the requirements of the new curriculum at its heart. We are therefore in a position to make an immediate start to support and prepare the education workforce for the changes ahead.
 9. Alongside this, we are making changes to Initial Teacher Training and Education and will work with training providers to ensure that newly qualified teachers are equipped to deliver the new curriculum.
 10. We have established an independent advisory group to guide us as we develop the new curriculum. This will be chaired by Professor Graham Donaldson with support from Professor John Furlong.
 11. We need to maintain momentum as there is clearly an appetite for change, which we saw during the Great Debate. We are on track to publish our plan, later in the autumn, to take *Successful Futures* forward.

Regional Education Consortia

12. The regional education consortia have a crucial role in the delivery of school improvement and will work to underpin the teaching profession in taking forward the challenges and demands of the new curriculum. The National Model for Regional Working came into operation in April 2014. The core purpose of consortia as outlined in the Model is to improve learner outcomes for all young people; ensure the delivery of high quality

teaching and learning; and to support and empower school leaders to better lead their schools. This is underpinned by a self-improving school system, where school improvement is supported and enabled by schools working collaboratively together. The consortia role is to facilitate and orchestrate this collaboration.

13. Early progress made by the four regional consortia was assessed by the Wales Audit Office and Estyn during fieldwork visits undertaken between November 2014 and January 2015. Their two reports were jointly published on 3 June 2015.
14. Both Estyn and the WAO noted positive progress achieved since the implementation of the National Model and made a number of recommendations to Welsh Government, the four regional education consortia and all 22 local authorities. All recommendations have been accepted in a national collective, system-wide response. Many of the recommendations have already been actioned, reflecting the progress made between the field-work being undertaken to the present time. We are working to ensure that there is clarity between ADEW, Welsh Government and the Diocesan authorities in regard to school improvement.
15. The work of the consortia is kept under review through an integrated cycle of review and challenge sessions. These sessions have clearly set aims and objectives. The summer session focused solely on progress made by the consortia in addressing the recommendations. The Autumn session will continue to monitor progress along with assessing the consortia's impact on learner outcomes.
16. As the National Model beds in, we have seen an increase in the sharing of good practice with joint good practice seminars delivered across Wales. More recently the four consortia arranged to facilitate a two day sharing good practice to be held on 10 and 11 September. The outline of the session includes governance and accountability; intervention models and categorisation; impactful strategies for support including school to school working and PDG; value for money and quality assurance. Importantly, the session provides the opportunity to jointly highlight and tackle all-Wales issues with each consortium leading nationally on named issues and priorities, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication. Increasingly, strategic leads are liaising with counterparts in other consortia to share planning, which is helping to ensure greater consistency.
17. Whilst consortia are increasingly sharing good practice within and across their regions, they are also collaborating formally. Working together the four regional consortia formed an independent Partnership to bid for the contract to perform the external verification of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3.
18. Consortia have improved the support and challenge they provide to school leaders. Quality assurance arrangements for consortia challenge

advisers have been strengthened, training has been provided for all challenge advisers, and generally consortia know their schools well, with schools reporting that their performance is scrutinised closely and fairly by challenge advisers. For example, the schools categorisation system is undertaken by regional consortia and moderated and verified at a national level to ensure consistency of approach.

19. Consortia have a key role to play in the identification and support of Successful Futures, New Deal and Digital Pioneer Schools and the rollout of the programme up to 2021. They are fully integrated into the governance arrangements for the development and delivery of the Successful Futures programme.

Measuring Impact

20. Estyn reported that whilst general improvements in standards of pupil attainment over the past three years could not be solely attributed to the development of regional consortia, nevertheless the published data reflects a gradual improvement in pupil attainment across all four regions. Early indications are that this progress has been generally maintained.
21. This year, differences in exam entry patterns have made the summer results only a partial picture of performance in Wales. Thousands of students sat some of their GCSE exams early in November or January depending on the subject. However the successes of those students were not recorded in the summer results. This means it is only in the autumn, when we get the verified GCSE results for the academic year, that we will see the full picture of our performance.
22. In terms of core subject performance, in English Language performance at A*-C for 16 year olds increased to 64.0% while for Mathematics, data from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), indicates performance at A*-C for 16 year olds for the academic year 2014/15 saw an improvement of 1.2 percentage points to 62.8%.
23. The main measure of performance however is the Level 2 inclusive data. This is the percentage of pupils attaining 5 GCSEs/equivalent A*-C including English/Welsh and maths. Provisional data for 2015 will be published on 24th September, and provisional consortia level results will be available from that date. This data includes all qualifications attained by pupils up to the end of KS4, regardless of when taken. The final information will be available in early December.
24. Performance at A levels in summer 2015 was stable with a pass rate of 74.3 percentage at A*-C for All Subjects, with an increase in students achieving A* grades.
25. Performance in the KS2 core subject indicator (CSI) in 2015 was higher across Wales and in each consortium compared to 2014, with over 87% of pupils in each consortium now achieving the CSI. There has been a

steady improvement in each consortium between 2012 and 2015, with increases ranging from 4 percentage points in EAS to 6.8 percentage points in Central South.

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