

Appendix 2a

North Wales Strategic Outline Business Case National Model for Regional Working - Challenging Foundation Phase Performance January 2015

1. The Case for Change

The Welsh Government Guidance document (February 2014) makes the case for change as follows:

“Local authorities retain the statutory responsibility for schools and school improvement. The national model is based on a vision of regional school improvement consortia working on behalf of local authorities to lead, orchestrate and co-ordinate the improvement in the performance of schools and education of young people. The prime mission and purpose of regional consortia is to help those who educate our children and young people. So, in future, their non-negotiable job will be to support schools and local authorities in their efforts to:

- improve learner outcomes for all young people;
- ensure the delivery of high quality teaching and learning; and support and empower school leaders to better lead their schools.”

Specifically in terms of Challenging Foundation Phase performance, the document describes the following strategic objectives:

“Early Years Foundation Phase support will involve providing challenge to leaders of Foundation Phase settings and liaising with headteachers and other providers to audit training needs and commission and quality assure an appropriate range of programmes.”

2. Methodology

- GwE commissioned Gwynedd Council’s Project Management Unit to conduct interviews (face to face and by telephone) with relevant officers within each Education Department during December 2014 with the aim of understanding current arrangements
- Based on the Welsh Government Guidance document and discussions with Education Department and GwE officers, Gwynedd’s Project Management Unit developed a set of generic Strategic Options (alongside a scoring and ranking matrix) which was used as the basis for choosing a preferred option at a meeting of the Education Directors Strategic Group on 16 January 2015.
- Background documentation is provided in **appendix 1**.

3. Choosing the Preferred Strategic Option

None of the pre-prepared generic options fully addressed the requirements for north Wales for the following reasons:

- As identified during the information gathering stage, GwE’s Challenge Adviser team does not include Foundation Phase expertise. However, all GwE Challenge Advisers are experts in challenging performance within maintained settings and the expertise for delivering the Foundation Phase rests within the individual Education Departments (e.g. Foundation Phase Training Officers)
- For non-maintained settings, the individual Education Departments challenge performance through the 10% Teacher Teams, In the context of the fact finding document, terms such as “coaching” and “supporting”, when used to describe the role of the 10% Teacher Teams, are synonymous with the term “challenging”.

4. The Preferred Strategic Option

Following lengthy consideration of all possible alternative models by the Education Directors Strategic Group, the following preferred Strategic Option was proposed and agreed.

Performance Challenge

- For maintained settings, current arrangements (through GwE annual visits 1,2 & 3) are considered robust and fully aligned with the National Model for Regional Working.
- However, it is acknowledged that an independent challenge of performance within non-maintained settings is currently not within GwE's remit. Further work on this issue is ongoing as part of GwE's 3 Year Programme and therefore falls outside the scope of the north Wales response to the National Model for Regional Working. It is also worth noting that the Welsh Government guidelines do not make it clear that they intend for a challenge to non-maintained setting performance to be included within the Regional Model.

Audit, Commission & Quality Assure Foundation Phase Training Programmes

- Education Departments and individual maintained settings to continue to identify training needs and to provide training opportunities for Foundation Phase staff
- GwE to continue to give challenge to Education Departments on how the Education Departments identify training needs and deliver training opportunities
- However, as a result of the new disbursement arrangements and planned reductions in Foundation Phase Grant levels for 2015/16, GwE and the Education Departments will develop and deliver cross-hub statutory training opportunities.

5. Identified Implementation Risks

Risk	Risk Category	Mitigation
Preferred option may fall short of the expected scale of changes (as contained within the guidelines)	Medium	Initial discussions with Geraint Rees, Welsh Government scheduled for 20 January 2015
Potential for inconsistency within the commissioning of training programmes (and therefore performance) across the region – given that Education Departments will remain responsible for commissioning	Low	GwE Challenge Adviser Team will continue to audit and quality assure the training programmes through Annual Visits 1,2,& 3

6. Indication of Identified Additional Costs & Resource for Change Delivery

Activity	Responsibility	Budget
Identification and development of regional training priorities and opportunities aligned with available budgets	GwE Management Team & Education Directors Strategic Group	None – business as usual

7. The Next Steps

The above Preferred Strategic Option will be presented to the next meeting of the Education Directors Strategic Group on 30 January 2015 for further consideration before a detailed business case and implementation plan are developed in consultation with Welsh Government.