

Appendix 3 – 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer

National Model For Regional Working – Strategic Options for 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer

1. Background and Context

- a) The North Wales Education Consortium previously co-ordinated and monitored the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer. The Senior Leader of the Consortium had a general responsibility for financial matters, a Consortium officer was responsible for the strategic co-ordination and monitoring of the grant and regional plan and a Consortium officer was responsible for the administration and remittance of the grant.

2. Current Arrangements for the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer

- a) One FTE who is responsible for the administration and remittance of the grant (one of a suite of regional grants) has been transferred from the former North Wales Consortium to GwE since September 2014. GwE has therefore adopted the remittance and administrative responsibilities associated with the grant as part and parcel of the said staff transfer. GwE is therefore in alignment with the National Model in terms of the administration and remittance of the said grant.
- b) Gwynedd Council currently acts as the banking authority for the North Wales region and GwE and a regionally agreed formula is utilised for the division of the grant to individual authorities to support the delivery of their 14 – 19 business plan. It is assumed that Gwynedd Council will continue to act as a banking authority for the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer. It is also assumed that a regionally agreed formula will continue to be utilised once the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer becomes integrated into the new Education Improvement Grant.

3. Current Arrangements for the Regional 14 – 19 Business Plan

- a) A Denbighshire Council officer is now responsible for the co-ordination of the regional plan and for the alignment across the region of the local strategies with national strategies.
- b) The pan North Wales 14 – 19 Network Steering Group provides a strategic overview role in that it is a forum to discuss and share best practice across the region and to set clear regional objectives in relation to aligning local strategies with national strategies. The Chair of the said group (Denbighshire Council 14 – 19 Manager) also provides a strategic overview role for the region in terms of aligning the regional plan with national strategies.
- c) 14 – 19 business plans are produced by individual authorities based on LEA priorities and collated into a regional plan that is then approved and monitored by Welsh Government.
- d) GwE does not currently have a strategic overview of the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer as this is provided to some extent by the aforementioned Denbighshire Council officer and pan North Wales 14 – 19 Network Steering Group.

4. Statutory Obligations and Responsibilities:

- a) The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 provides a statutory basis for 14 - 19 Learning Pathways. The Measure secures the creation of local curricula that will contain a wide range of courses and opportunities which learners aged 14-19 in Wales will have right to elect from. The measure also sets out the entitlement of learners to follow their elected course of study. The measure places a duty on Local Education Authorities in Wales to form local curricula for learners in Key Stage 4. It also provides Welsh Ministers with regulation making powers to stipulate the minimum number of courses of study to be included within a local curriculum, and the minimum number of vocational courses of study to ensure that local area curricula contain a wide range of options of study both academic and vocational in nature.
- b) LEAs are responsible for the preparation, submission to Welsh Government and delivery of their approved business plans.
- c) The local co-ordination of the networks that contribute to the 14 – 19 business plans is undertaken by officers from each LEA.

5. Requirements of the National Model for Regional Working:

- a) The National Model for Regional Working Guidance document states that it is within the Regional Education Consortium's function and role, through challenge, to:
“align national and local 14-19 strategies across the wider consortium area to help raise standards in the core subjects of English/Welsh and mathematics, ensure high quality courses offer relevant training for pupils and contribute effectively to regeneration strategies.”
- b) The National Model for Regional Working Guidance document also states that the Regional Consortium's brokerage and improvement activities will include:
 - a “strategic overview of the regional 14 – 19 offer, including allocation of resources to programmes in line with Welsh Government priorities, to include:
 - support for planning the use of grants
 - ensuring school and provider provision is in line to deliver the expected impact inherent in these grants
 - working with local authorities to provide a strategic overview to challenge and support all providers, including FE Colleges and private training providers, to ensure equality of access to the development opportunities
 - administering the relevant grants and co-ordinating and supporting bids for emerging grant opportunities.”
- c) The interpretation of the National Model wording is of paramount importance when considering the following options for alignment. It is understood that the National Model requires the Regional Education Consortium (now GwE) to provide a regional strategic overview of the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer. The National Model does not stipulate that the Education Consortium (GwE) is responsible for the preparation, submission to Welsh Government or delivery of the strategic plans which is undertaken by LEA employed officers (partially funded by the 14 – 19 grant and LEA core funding).

6. Strategic Options

- a) In view of the above facts, the following options are deemed to address the requirements of the National Model for Regional Working in terms of the regional strategic overview role:

			Minimum Score 1 – Maximum Score 5			
Options	Advantages	Disadvantages	Alignment with National Model	Delivering Additional Value	Potential for Successful Change Delivery	Total Score
<p>1. Do Nothing (Maintain Current Arrangements)</p> <p>(i.e. previous Consortium officer now responsible for administering of grant through GwE / Gwynedd to remain banking authority/ Denbighshire to remain lead authority on 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer and co-ordination of regional plan / Chair of Regional Steering Group & group itself to provide strategic overview and quality assurance role in terms of delivering WG objectives)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of delivery without any change Robust regional collaboration by means of pan North Wales Steering Group and Denbighshire as lead authority Advantage of wealth of expertise and experience within said group to undertake strategic overview and quality assurance role through sharing of best practice across the region to drive improvement No additional costs for delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GwE would not meet National Model requirement of strategic overview across the region to ensure alignment of local strategies with national strategies No link between GwE and LEAs in terms of strategic overview and alignment of local strategies with national strategies but link in terms of grant administration and remittance No independent evaluation of quality and consistency of local business plans within region 	0	0	0	0
<p>2. Create new post within GwE to undertake strategic overview of the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer across the region (Challenge Advisor presumably since NM stipulates that the regional consortium will align national and local 14-19 strategies across the wider consortium through challenge)</p> <p>(i.e. Denbighshire would no longer be required to co-ordinate the regional plan / the regional Steering Group would still be required to discuss and share best practice across the region in order to raise standards / GwE representative would sit on said</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of delivery without major changes Robust regional collaboration by means of regional 14 – 19 Steering Group Clear accountability in terms of LEAs to prepare, submit and deliver plans Clear accountability in terms of GwE, through challenge, to provide strategic overview and support for LEAs GwE would be fully aligned with the requirements of the National Model Link between GwE and LEAs in terms of grant remittance and support for planning use of grants New post would possibly provide more focused regional link to Welsh Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional cost of new post (Challenge Advisor) Additional post in GwE structure 	0	0	0	0

<p>group)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal additional cost (one FTE (Challenge Advisor) first and then asses capacity after one year possibly) Post would concentrate on strategic overview of 14 – 19 offer, support for LEAs to plan grant expenditure and challenge providers and would provide consistency by means of being a continuous presence on the regional Steering Group 					
<p>3. GwE to commission an independent consultant to conduct a quality evaluation of regional 14 – 19 business plan. Evaluation findings to be utilised by GwE, LEAs and regional Steering Group to share best practice and to drive improvement.</p> <p>(i.e. previous Consortium officer now responsible for administering of grant through GwE / Gwynedd to remain banking authority/ Denbighshire to remain lead authority on 14 – 19 matters and co-ordination of regional plan / Chair of Regional Steering Group & group itself to provide strategic overview role in terms of delivering WG aims and objectives)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of delivery without major change Robust regional collaboration by means of regional 14 – 19 Steering Group Advantage of wealth of expertise and experience within said group to undertake strategic overview and sharing of best practice across the region to drive improvement and align local strategies with national strategies Clear accountability in terms of lead authority to co-ordinate production of regional plan Clear accountability in terms of GwE to commission independent quality evaluation of regional plan Minimal additional cost to appoint consultant to undertake quality evaluation of regional business plan (£5k - £10k annually) An independent quality evaluation would give an impartial and objective view of the regional plan GwE focus would remain on improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordination and strategic overview elements would be separated – co-ordination would remain with lead authority and strategic overview would sit with GwE Additional resource would need to be allocated to GwE to commission consultant to undertake quality assurance exercise of regional plan GwE would not be fully aligned with National Model requirements i.e. <p>An independent consultant could not provide the following elements on a continuous basis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “support for planning the use of grants ensuring school and provider provision is in line to deliver the expected impact inherent in these grants working with local authorities to provide a strategic overview to challenge and support all providers, including FE Colleges and private training providers, to ensure equality of access to the development opportunities administering the relevant grants and co-ordinating and supporting bids for emerging grant opportunities.” 	<p>0</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>0</p>