



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

01/02/2017

Report by: Lead Director & Managing Director

Subject: Review of GwE Operating Arrangements

1.0 Purpose of the Report

To update Joint Committee on the findings of the review commissioned at the meeting of 25th November 2016 and to approve the recommendations for implementation.

2.0 Background

2.1 The departure of the previous Managing Director provided the opportunity for us not only to review the effectiveness and consistency of current school improvement practice within the region, but also to investigate if the leadership and governance arrangements were fit for purpose. It is clear to the Management Board and the region's Chief Executives that there are opportunities to better define roles and accountabilities for school improvement and wider education services across the region.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 In November we recommitted to delivering improvements in our schools and to addressing the WAO and Estyn recommendations with rigour and pace. We also committed to reviewing existing school improvement practice, with a particular focus on the secondary phase, identifying key aspects of practice that we need to address as a region. The review's report is attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 The review report sets out the importance of moving to a revised operating model to address weaknesses in provision and outcomes in the secondary sector. Recommendations related to this are set out in Appendix 2.

3.3 The findings of the review also enable the Joint Committee to take stock and undertake any redefining in the scope and responsibilities of the Managing Director post as we enter into a recruitment process. A separate report on this agenda sets out this appointment process.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 Joint Committee are recommended to support:

- the recommendations of the review (at Appendix 1); and
- the changes to operating arrangements (Appendix 2).

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The proposals at Appendix 1 and 2 can be secured within existing resources.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 Any structural or person specification changes will be subject to equalities impact and compliance work.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 Any workforce planning or structural change tasks will be subject to workforce consultation and decision making protocols.

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

8.1 Informal consultation has been undertaken with the GwE Management Board, Local Authority Chief Executives and the Chair of the Joint Committee.

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

The intention to report on the review of the partnership's arrangements and governance has already been highlighted to the Joint Committee. Several steps are set out in the recommendation, and aspects are expected to be placed before the committee for further attention. Some matters, if developed, may require the agreement of the individual councils, but it is expected that these pathways will be highlighted as the review progresses.

Statutory Finance Officer:

The report's author has advised that these recommendations will not cause any financial implications. The Joint Committee will also wish to see improved governance, through establishing clear lines of accountability from the Managing Director to the 6 Directors of Education and the Joint Committee, which should lead to improved standards and value for money from GwE.

Appendix 1

GwE Review

1.0 Context

The context for this review is as follows:

‘The departure of the current Management Director provides the opportunity for us not only to review the effectiveness and consistency of current school improvement practice within the region, but also to investigate if the leadership and governance arrangements are fit for purpose. It is clear to the Management Board that there are opportunities to better define roles and accountabilities for school improvement and wider education services across the region.’

Interim arrangements need to be resilient, focused on delivering the regional business plan (including PIAP), delivering and exceeding the outcomes within the plan.

The Management Board advised that:

1. The review should take place immediately and be completed as a matter of urgency. The review will help inform Joint Committee of present strengths and areas which need improving and require change.
2. The review alongside the regional discussion on public service collaborative working arrangements will help Joint Committee determine the shape of the future MD role and Regional Educational Governance.
3. Subject to the outcomes of the above discussions, any further revised operating arrangements or appointments to go live as soon as possible. Delay would risk compromising GwE inspection outcomes in the Autumn of 2017.

2.0 Main Findings

There is universal support across North Wales from all stakeholders for GwE to be a successful organisation. Many see the present as an opportunity to revisit the core purpose and define a mid and long term vision of what GwE should deliver for schools. This needs to be done in partnership with individual Local Authorities or Local Authorities as a group as there is also too much variation in the quality of support of functions that sit outside the GwE remit. This inhibits the ability of GwE work to be as successful as it could in some areas of North Wales.

There is a lack of clarity about GwE's strategic direction. The present business plan and organisational design does not meet the present challenges and how to tackle priority areas.

The present accountability structure at officer level is unclear. Senior roles within GwE are unclear and do not have a clear focus.

Performance of individual authorities in various key stages is also too variable. The majority of the LAs do not perform closely enough to their expected free school meal ranking position when compared with other LAs in Wales consistently across the key stages. GwE have not focussed sufficiently on raising standards consistently or rigorously enough. Neither have they been held accountable enough for raising standards.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are not good enough across the region across a range of key indicators.

Teacher assessments are inconsistent across schools and LAs.

There is no clear regional strategy for working with the Special School Sector and PRUs. The links between GwE and LA services such as ALN and Inclusion especially in the area of raising standards of vulnerable learners and appropriate provision is undeveloped.

Progress against the Estyn inspection recommendations has been slow and not tracked sufficiently.

Management Board have met regularly and discussed a range of issues mainly around operational systems and best use of budgets. Discussions on finding solutions to raising standards at school, LA and Consortium level have been limited.

3.0 Performance

Local Authority FSM Ranking 2016

Ynys Môn = 10	Conwy = 8	Flintshire = 6
Gwynedd = 4	Denbighshire = 14	Wrexham = 9

Ynys Môn	KS2 (C SI)	Ranking	KS3 (C SI)	Ranking	KS4 (L2+)	Ranking
2014	87.8	7	83.6	9	53.8	14
2015	91.8	3	84.5	9	56.9	12
2016	89.4	9	87.6	7	*58.5 (59.3)	14

Gwynedd	KS2 (C SI)	Ranking	KS3 (C SI)	Ranking	KS4 (L2+)	Ranking
2014	86	14	89.1	1	61.1	5
2015	89.5	6	91.3	1	63.3	5
2016	89.8	7	92	2	*65.9 (69.0)	4

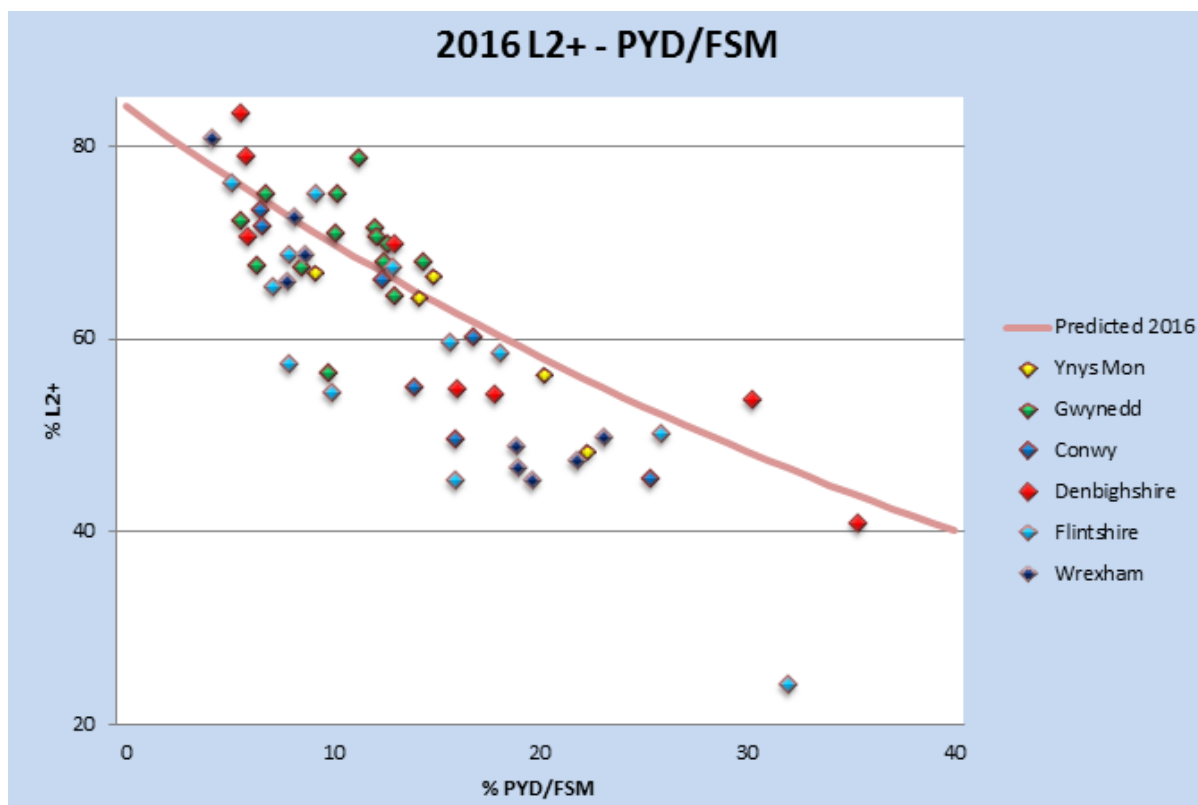
Conwy	KS2 (C SI)	Ranking	KS3 (C SI)	Ranking	KS4 (L2+)	Ranking
2014	84.3	17	83.7	8	55.5	11
2015	85.8	19	87.2	6	54.2	18
2016	86.8	20	87.3	9	*55.9 (56.0)	17

Denbighshire	KS2 (C SI)	Ranking	KS3 (C SI)	Ranking	KS4 (L2+)	Ranking
2014	86.6	10	83.2	10	55.6	10
2015	87.9	12	84.3	12	56.1	14
2016	88.6	14	86.4	12	*58.6 (60.9)	13

Flintshire	KS2 (C SI)	Ranking	KS3 (C SI)	Ranking	KS4 (L2+)	Ranking
2014	86.1	13	84.3	5	61.9	3
2015	87.9	11	87.1	7	60.6	8
2016	90.1	5	88.4	6	*61.2 (61.7)	10

Wrexham	KS2 (C SI)	Ranking	KS3 (C SI)	Ranking	KS4 (L2+)	Ranking
2014	84.2	19	78.4	16	51	18
2015	87.7	14	80.9	19	52.1	20
2016	87.7	18	84.3	16	*55.3 (55.4)	18

Standards at Key Stage 4 are not good enough across the Region across a range of key indicators. Too many secondary schools find themselves performing below the expected level. Progress has been too slow in comparison with similar schools across Wales.



	2014					2015					2016				
	L2+	L1	L2	CPS	5A*-A	L2+	L1	L2	CPS	5A*-A	L2+	L1	L2	CPS	5A*-A
Anglesey (10)	14	6	9	3	10	12	8	16	9	13	14	5	15	11	10
Gwynedd (4)	5	1	4	1	2	5	1	6	1	3	4	1	9	4	8
Conwy (8)	11	8	8	11	8	18	14	14	17	16	17	17	16	17	19
Denbighshire (14)	10	11	2	5	9	14	17	10	11	8	13	20	14	16	14
Flintshire (6)	3	14	15	13	19	8	18	15	15	15	10	13	17	15	12
Wrexham (9)	18	21	21	20	20	20	20	22	21	20	18	19	21	18	20

4.0 Inspection

Following the Estyn inspection of the region during the spring 2016, five of the key indicators were deemed to be adequate and the value for money was deemed unsatisfactory. Progress against these recommendations has been slow and not tracked sufficiently.

5.0 Leadership and Provision

Over the last three years GwE’s relationship with schools has improved as the organisation has found a better balance between the need to support and challenge schools. Primary support and challenge is generally good and access to training and development programmes has improved and become clearer.

Overall, there is a growing strength in the primary sector. This is down to two main factors.

- There is a significant 80:20 bias in the National Model as implemented in GwE towards the primary sector
- There is a significantly greater experience and successful track record at senior leadership level in the primary sector amongst members of the team

The Estyn inspection profile is generally good, especially in the primary sector.

However, the picture is different in the secondary sector. Due to the 80:20 entitlement model which is operating at present and the difficulty in recruiting full time good quality officers, there has and is a lack of access to effective full time secondary Challenge Advisors. This is especially acute in priority areas such as leadership at different levels, Mathematics and English. This lack of capacity in the secondary sector hinders the ability of GwE to make immediate impact.

At present, Challenge Advisers feel that their roles are being too constrained by the present operational model. Too much of their time is tied up in the generic challenge adviser role working mainly on school categorisation. As a result, Challenge Advisers do not give strategic lead on educational matters that would benefit the delivery of the Consortia and individual LA priorities. As a result, individually and collectively they are not being developed sufficiently and their expertise is not being put to best use to lead on educational issues across hubs and the region.

A thorough knowledge of schools at leadership level has developed well over time. This is due in no small part to the National Categorisation process. However, there is a growing feeling that this process is over laborious and that time would be better spent in delivering improvements rather than ratifying information that the school and GwE already know.

GwE's role is unclear and inconsistent when appointing senior posts in schools. Greater clarity of GwE's role in partnership with the LA should ensure that appointments are effective. There is currently no coherent regional strategy to upskill and develop working relationships with Governing Bodies and Management Boards.

There is no clear regional strategy for working with the Special School Sector and PRUs. The links between GwE and local authority services such as ALN and Inclusion especially in the area of raising standards of vulnerable learners and appropriate provision is undeveloped. The introduction of a range of new legislation would merit a closer working and a more regional approach in this area.

Generally, there is now a good working relationship between all hub leads and individual LAs. The Challenge and Support Senior Adviser and deputy model is generally effective and provides a good balance to each hub. There is now a better flow of information being exchanged and in the best instances a clear understanding of one another's role in driving the improvement agenda. These meetings can be challenging in trying to find the best solution but the strength of the dialogue and the co-ownership of the improvement agenda are strong success factors in the best instances.

There are examples of good practice in each hub, but this practice is not shared effectively across the Region. As a result, there is too much variability in what GwE can offer schools depending on their geographical location and skills base of staff. The Regional Quality Assurance Network/Board is beginning to bring regional consistency to individual hub practice through identifying best practice and sharing this across the Region.

Individual LA plans previously referred to as Annexes have improved. There is significantly more detail identified to improve co-identified areas even down to individual school level. This has allowed greater focus to monitoring meetings and stronger accountability of individual challenge advisers for delivering. However, more work needs to be done on the overall monitoring process to ensure a consistent approach across the Region.

The scrutiny function has matured across the Region. Local scrutiny members have a better understanding of what is GwE's purpose and what it is trying to achieve. In the best instances

members of a scrutiny committee have been out in schools seeking headteachers views about how well GwE is supporting and challenging schools. They have brought their findings back to the Committee and held a triangulation meeting with GwE hub lead and LA officers to identify strengths and areas to develop. As a result, further work will be undertaken as members will shadow GwE challenge advisers in different functions of their role to further deepen their understanding. Scrutiny members understanding of standards in schools and GwE provision in their schools have been developed through detailed reports from Senior Challenge Adviser. Their presence in these meetings has helped address perceptions and sort out any issues member wish to raise and help manage local expectations through explaining their role in detail.

Senior roles are unclear and do not have sufficient focus. There is a lack of clarity about GwE's strategic direction. The present business plan does not meet the present challenges and how to tackle priority areas. Service performance management and operational budget monitoring is significantly under-developed and does not hold individuals, service priority holders or LA to account for their performance. As a result, there is no mechanism to determine value for money.

The present accountability structure at officer level is unclear. It is unclear which officer is the lead role regarding accountability to the Joint Committee. Lead Chief Executive, Lead Director and Managing Director all have roles but this is not distinguished clearly enough in day to day operation. This leads to a number of issues including a single point of contact with Welsh Government and lack of clarity how fellow Directors can be actively involved in shaping developing direction between meetings.

Links between national and local priorities are not clear. Much work needs to be done to ensure that future National developments support local priorities. Also, a clearer picture needs to be established on each individual school's journey to be ready for the challenges of Qualified for Life.

In a recent Change Board meeting in Cardiff the Welsh Government's Director of Education suggested that he had discussed with WLGA officers the need to review the National model further. This new review would include looking at extending the National Model to include wellbeing and Equity. This could include further elements of the present Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion services which currently sit within LAs.

6.0 Future Post of Managing Director

Since GwE's inception in 2013, there has been a significant increase in the expectations of the role of the Managing Director. As noted above a further review of the National Model is imminent and it is clear that there is a commitment from Welsh Government to increase the breadth of responsibilities even further into the areas of Wellbeing, Equity and potentially Additional Learning Needs.

Also, in the same period there has been a significant reduction in LA education workforce. As a result, the role of the Consortia and LA has become unclear. Some LAs have found it difficult to work with GwE to address issues such as tackling underperforming staff in schools. Also, as standards in Key Stage 4 are not good enough on key indicators in four out of the six LAs and without sufficient capacity there is a serious risk that some of these LAs will not be in a strong position to be inspected when Estyn begin their new cycle of LA inspections.

In advertising the post of the MD, the Joint Committee has options to consider:

- Advertise a like for like post taking account of the increased responsibilities since 2013;
- Advertise a post that will include the present functions but will also build in the need to be able to manage extra services such as elements of ALN and Inclusion;

- Advertise for a post that will manage Education services in their entirety at a Consortia basis.

In view of the present situation in relation to standards across the region, recognise the present situation in relation to standards and improvement against the Estyn post inspection plan and reflect WG's interest in the region's commitment to the regional school improvement service it is suggested that the post be advertised on a like for like basis [including the additional responsibilities undertaken since 2013]. In this context, it is also suggested that the present level of remuneration should be maintained [to maintain general alignment with the remuneration levels in other consortia].

Any further increase in responsibilities following a further review of the National Model should be reviewed as and when appropriate.

There is also a need to seek clarity around who is the Accountable officer for school improvement services delivered by GwE across the region. This will include reviewing and streamlining the present governance arrangements.

Appendix 2

Recommendations

1. Urgently appoint a Managing Director having taken due regard to the options in this report;
2. Urgently change the present operating model to ensure that there is a clear focus on improving performance in secondary schools especially at Key Stage 4;
3. Individual LAs should review their present capacity and ability to work in partnership with GwE to ensure performance is improved;
4. Review the Governance structures alongside the next review of the National Model;
5. Implement a service and individual performance management model that will help address the Estyn recommendations;
6. Develop a distributive leadership model that will give more staff leadership roles and give them opportunities to develop their own skills;
7. Develop clarity between National and Local priorities so that they complement one another and do not compete;
8. Develop consistency across the three hubs to ensure equity of provision across the Region;
9. Review the business plan so that GwE priorities are understood by all;
10. Clarify the roles of staff especially senior staff so that priorities are delivered; and
11. Review the operational business support model of GwE.