

## REPORT ON GWE WORK PROGRAMME

### Context and summary

The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system and schooling has been significantly disrupted. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March, schools were re-purposed to support children of key workers and some vulnerable learners. School leaders have worked tirelessly to adapt to new arrangements and develop processes to support the learners and families within their homes and communities.

GwE staff have also adapted their work in order to continue to provide services and support for all our school communities. We believe that the most important thing for each school in this time of unprecedented change and disruption is the safety and well-being of our children and our workforce and doing all we can to support the physical and mental well-being of our children and young people throughout this period so when the time comes for them to return to school they will return with motivation and enthusiasm to learn. All Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) have ensured regular contact with the head teacher of their link schools, to check on their wellbeing and to ensure that they receive the required support. Numerous GwE staff have also offered 'hands on' support over the past few months by providing cover in schools that are short staffed.

Provision and learning does not mirror what schools would offer during normal times. Regulations around National Curriculum have been relaxed. As a result, schools have the opportunity to consider what learning is appropriate to their learners in these very challenging circumstances based on:

- time for maintaining and developing literacy, numeracy and digital skills;
- building resilience and reflection on personal well-being;
- offering opportunities to maintain connections with teaching and support staff and peers during this period of potential social isolation.

Schools and GwE have collaborated to ensure that learners can access a range of learning materials via a digital platform. GwE have established a Google Classroom for each key stage and uploaded an initial bank of practical resources and links for schools to adapt and use with their own learners. We have also produced audio and video guidance for teachers to show how digital tools can be used effectively to create effective resources for distance learning.

GwE have also collated information on the capacity of our schools to use learning platforms and whether they have experienced any difficulties accessing or using them. This was to identify which schools needed additional support in developing their on-line distance learning resource base and which members of staff required further training in using the technology. We have also looked at ways to support our more vulnerable learners including how their parents or carers can best support their children's learning.

At a national level, we have implemented very close working arrangements between the four consortia to ensure immediate benefits from a collegiate response to these very challenging conditions. We have been in regular discussions and collaboration with Welsh Government colleagues on delivering a Continuity for Learning Plan and have been involved in supporting most of the key deliverables.

We have produced a guidance in support of effective distance learning and have also been very proactive in helping all schools to produce their own Distance Learning models. We have produced exemplar models to share with schools building on the good practice that was already been demonstrated. These have been based on sound international research and a

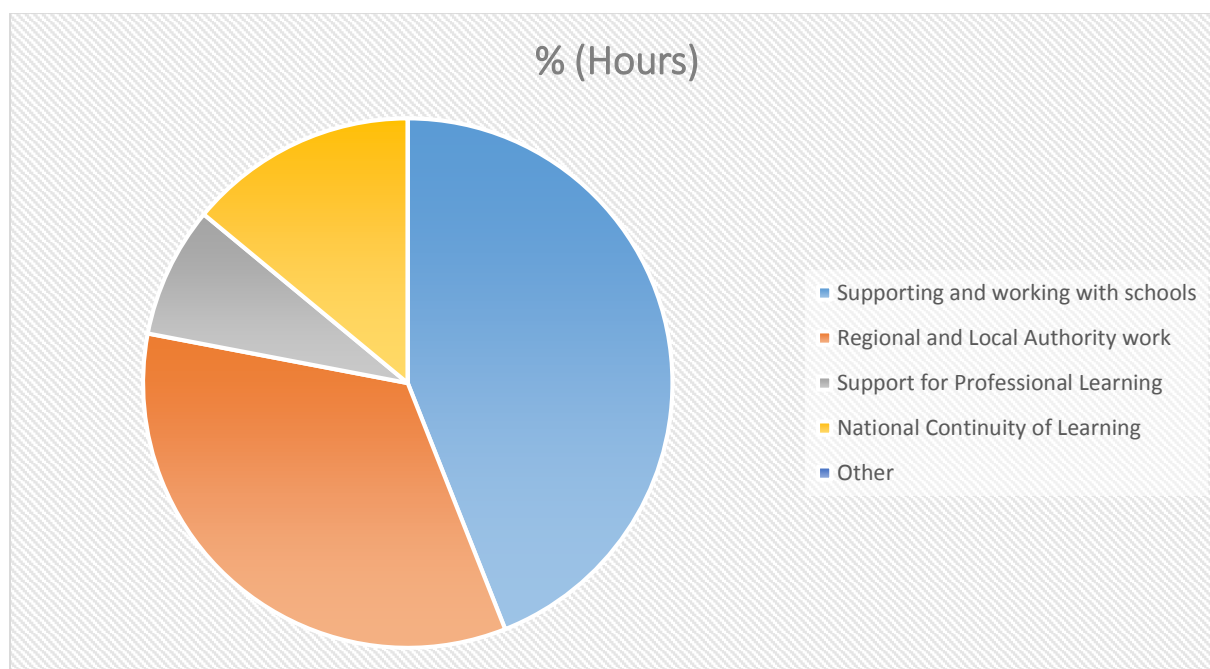
deeper understanding of distance learning definitions and principles. These have also been shared on a national level.

We are therefore prioritising support for all learners to keep learning and are supporting planning of transition effectively back into school when the time comes. Our advice and support will focus on the work of schools in considering how all learners can be supported to return to education in a positive frame of mind, and to continue as seamlessly as possible with their learning.

### Documented activities and time spent

All Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) ‘check-in’ with their line manager each morning and a list of their daily tasks is documented in their calendars. Below is a summary, of the activities that have been undertaken by GwE staff since the lockdown begun covering the period between March 23<sup>rd</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.

Category	Hours	%
Supporting and working with schools	9049	44%
Regional and Local Authority work	6992	34%
Support for Professional Learning	1645	8%
National Continuity of Learning	2879	14%
Other	45	<1%



### Summary of activities, outcomes and impact

ACTIVITIES
<p><b>Supporting and working with schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting individual schools or Hubs when there has been a shortage of staff to attend.</li> </ul>

- Keeping regular contact with schools in order to ensure health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils.
- Developing guidance, support and resources for schools to support effective distance learning in schools
- Referencing effective practice internationally when it comes to distance learning.
- Providing a suite of Websites and reference points for Foundation Phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4 teachers.
- Modelling examples of effective distance learning and also sharing nationally.
- Supporting schools on how to best deliver this Distance Learning through a blended method which includes recorded video, effective use of HwB, populating Google Classrooms, using paper copies when there's no access to internet etc.
- Arrange regular 'Teams' contact meetings with 100% of clusters (primary, secondary, special schools and PRUs) to share regular updates and ensure heads have regular contact and time to share any problems that may arise.
- Support schools with Digital Learning and produce useful 'How To' videos so that teachers can further develop and vary their distance learning.
- Individual support to subject specific teachers in the secondary.
- Regular meetings with groups of subject teachers in secondary.
- Ensuring guidance and support on relevant issues for HT forums across all 6 LAs. Present updates at meetings and answering questions that arise.
- Provide support to schools in relation to Qualifications – summer 2020 and 2021 examination series.
- Support for schools in their preparation for the repurposing of learners back into school at various stages of lockdown easing.
- To identify good practice, need for support and pupil/parent engagement with schools.

#### **Regional and Local Authority work**

- Sharing of information, key messages and work streams with LA Officers.
- Updating LA officers on schools and various GwE matters
- Attend County Quality Board meetings, addressing subsequent actions.
- Discuss initial strategies, engagement and obstacles.
- Supporting Headteacher interviews - meetings with the appointment panel to support their discussion shortlisting, interview arrangements and questions.
- Attend and contribute to Head teachers' conference calls.
- Support with distance learning and engagement/ supporting vulnerable learners.
- Developing checklist on universal wellbeing.
- Ensuring support and guidance to Core Leads.
- Feeding back on schools and cluster work.
- Disseminating regional information and ensuring consistency of message.
- Supporting schools to re-open - GwE's SIAs have teamed up with local authority representatives to formulate a robust return to school plan which will support all schools in the region to ensure they have the right policies in place and a comprehensive risk assessment which they can tailor to their own particular school.
- Transition of learners back into schools - developing risk assessment and guidance.
- Developing regional guidance, support and resources for schools.
- Development of resources and approaches to implement a skills based approach to distance learning and ensuring quality assurance of developed materials.
- Ensuring consistency of national and regional information

- Ensuring effective communication to all team members through weekly Full Team meetings, Local team meetings etc.
- Performance Management reviews.
- Collating information regarding distance learning and learner engagement.
- Identifying and sharing good practice, need for support and pupil/parent engagement with schools
- Preparation and attending regional meetings – Management Board and Joint Committee
- Reviewing business plan, annual reports.
- Co-ordinate regional and local response to national consultation.
- Liaise with key stakeholders, e.g., Estyn LALI visits, FE Colleges, HEI, etc

### **Support for Professional Learning**

GwE staff have also developed or are in the process of developing the following for schools:

- A comprehensive catalogue of PL that has been identified for Teaching Assistants (TAs) to follow. A dedicated Google Classroom has been set up for these TAs which has already oversubscribed with well over a 1,500 members.
- A walk through guide with raising awareness activities for teachers on the Curriculum for Wales
- Webinars tailor made for head teachers around Change Management, developing a school vision, creating time and space for PL, Planning for Curriculum Change and Leading Pedagogy which will include some face to face interaction, group discussions, think pieces and video clips for reflection.
- Reflecting on pedagogy – for current practice and for the new curriculum.
- Contribute to the national strategy of supporting NQTs during this period where their focus will be on pedagogy and research due to not being able to have class access.

SIAAs have undertaken various Professional Development activities to ensure up to date knowledge and understanding:

- Understanding of effective Distance Learning to provide guidance and create models.
- Increasing knowledge base for effective teaching and learning in literacy from research/writings across the world.
- Use of ICT for Distance Learning/working.

### **National Continuity of Learning**

- National Continuity of Learning Strategy - Regional contribution to WG national workstreams.
- Guidance and strategy for distance learning: Development of national strategy and guidelines related to the Continuity of Learning deliverables with regions
- Develop guidance, support and resources for teachers, schools and stakeholders
- Providing models and resources to be issued to regional/national schools. Consider local approach to include models, planning, assessment and monitoring progress
- Ensuring quality assurance of developed materials.
- Develop digital learning.
- Attend meetings with Estyn, WG and the other Consortia
- Contribute to ongoing projects, e.g., MAT, Post-16
- Supporting the follow up to the Wales PISA Project 2020.
- Preparing a new HLTA programme

- Support Welsh Government with information to inform the Bill on the new Curriculum

#### **Other**

- Support for Newly Qualified Teachers and ensuring clarity regarding completing their induction year.
- Strong partnership work with Bangor University to ensure initial teacher training students have clarity on the appointment system for next year.
- Strong partnership working with Caban to ensure increased research opportunities and recognition of excellence by School staff.

#### **OUTCOMES AND IMPACT**

- Effective communication provided via single point of contact (SIA) for school leaders and ease of access to support.
- Schools have been able to remain open to key workers in the event of staff shortages.
- Schools are well informed and confident that support is available should any needs arise. School leaders' wellbeing is supported through regular communication.
- Shared understanding of the importance of the welfare of pupils, parents and staff
- Clear guidance given on how to prioritise and structure Distance Learning.
- Schools having access to a wealth of quality resources for reference as they plan for and deliver distance learning.
- Comprehensive models available for schools to adopt, adapt or refer to. This has in turn ensured strengthened leadership and improved balance of work that can be completed at home.
- Co-ordinated approach to supporting schools which has led to greater consistency and quality of distance learning across the region.
- Best practice being shared across schools i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems etc.
- Strengthened use of ICT to enable effective communication between schools, within schools and with school stakeholders.
- School staff being upskilled through the use of a digital platform for professional development.
- Information shared with the LA is up to date and timely support is given to any School.
- In conjunction with the LA, ensured that the process of appointing school leadership candidates is appropriate and fair.
- Consistent messages disseminated to schools by GwE / LA officers.
- Strengthened collaboration between peers at a cluster level through digital means ensuring co-constructed strategic thinking.
- Strengthened collaboration between local authority officers and GwE.
- Clear regional and local approach in place for the repurposing of schools.
- Effective cascading of key messages to school staff to ensure consistency and clarity.
- Increased collaboration between regions and other stakeholders.
- Increased understanding of key messages and work streams.
- Stronger awareness amongst school leaders of effective strategies to ensure continuation of school business.
- Quality Professional Learning developed in readiness for future needs.
- Newly Qualified Teachers having clarity regarding completing their induction year.
- Strong partnership work with Bangor University to ensure initial teacher training students have clarity on the appointment system for next year.
- Strong partnership working with Caban to ensure increased research opportunities and recognition of excellence by School staff.

## Next steps

We see that Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) will have a crucial role over the coming months to:

- Continue to make regular contact with schools to support the wellbeing of Headteachers and staff;
- Support schools with developing models for distance and blended learning including sharing effective practice;
- Support schools to ensure effective teaching and learning within these distance and blended models;
- Support local authorities and schools with repurposing of learners back into schools;
- Work with local authorities and schools to ensure that all schools have a comprehensive support plan to help them address the significant challenges ahead;
- Deliver or broker the support needed based on each individual school's need;
- Support and facilitate cluster meetings and networks to ensure effective school to school support and joint working;
- Support schools to develop effective processes and strategic documents that are appropriate for the current and evolving circumstances;
- Provide support and advice for governors;
- Support schools with recruitment and appointments;
- Support schools with professional learning when it is appropriate and timely to do so;
- Support schools and clusters with guidance and support on the national reform journey when it is appropriate and timely to do so.

The finer details of the work of the region and the evolving role of the GwE Supporting Improvement Adviser are outlined below.

### **1. Supporting distance learning and developing a blended approach to encompass distance learning and face to face learning**

So far a large portion of SIAs work has been supporting effective distance learning in schools before and following the publication Welsh Government Guidance Document on effective Distance Learning (see details of activities above).

This work will need to continue in the short term and as discussions develop around phased return to schools for some learners, SIAs will need to:

- Support schools with effective blended learning where some pupils will be supported at home and others taught in schools.
- Ensure that there is no gap in the equity of provision as some pupils return to some form of education.
- Continue to support the health and wellbeing of teachers (who may be teaching several age groups) when they need to teach some learners in schools and continue to support others at home.
- Continue to ensure the health and wellbeing of learners who will be returning to a very different classroom during the phased return.
- Provide further Professional Learning to teachers and classroom assistants on how to best model this 'mixed economy' of provision.
- As lockdown for most continues, support teachers in the transition from consolidating previous learning to teaching of new aspects.
- Support schools when moving to monitoring and giving constructive feedback on work presented.

## **2. Supporting the repurposing of schools**

The logistics of further opening schools to not only the children of key workers and vulnerable children, but also to specific year groups are complicated and pose numerous problems. GwE's Management Board have committed to working in strong partnership across the region to adopt a consistent approach in developing a supportive framework to help all school settings during this next phase of preparing and working in the new normal. As part of this, GwE's SIAs have teamed up with local authority representatives to formulate a robust return to school plan which will support all schools in the region to ensure they have the right policies in place and a comprehensive risk assessment which they can tailor to their own particular school. The resource will include:

- A key responsibilities document with actions for consideration.
- Generic policies agreed with LAs which schools can adopt and adapt with their Governors to respond to the numerous health and safety complications caused by COVID-19.
- A detailed generic risk assessment for schools to use and adapt for their own settings.
- A one stop dashboard developed by GwE SIAs which will include all the above as well as links to important websites and key documents.
- Cover the important aspects of safety, site and premises, teaching and learning, staff support, pupil support, other key management tasks,
- Ensure there are clear and established communication channels to include headteacher forums where updates can be shared regularly and offer models of good practice of communication with governors, learners and parents/carers
- Working in partnership with the wider team of LA colleagues for example, inclusion, HR, transport, GwE will consider practical, well-being and training needs of school staff and ensure these are appropriately supported, to include professional learning where appropriate
- As part of the teaching and learning aspect, GwE will work in partnership to consider learners' needs and appropriate learning experiences for them on return, in particular, supporting health and wellbeing.
- Within working with the new normal, GwE's team of SIAs will work with schools to ensure remote learning and how this contributes to learning 'in school'. As part of this, GwE will continue to work with LA partners to monitor and update assessments within risks and capacity as necessary.
- GwE SIAs and LA reps will also be working closely with schools as they strive to adapt their settings to be as safe as possible for their learners.

## **3. Supporting Professional Learning (PL)**

Our PL support in GwE over the last 2 months has been focused on effective distance learning. All schools have been on a journey to find out what model of distance learning works best for them, their cluster and their pupils. There will inevitably be continued support from GwE for effective distance learning as we move to a phased return to schools, but we also recognise that further down the line that some teachers and classroom assistants' may be looking for further PL. Current focus is on the following areas:

- Sharing national and international models on how to best develop effective distance learning.
- Providing models for effective distance and blended learning for the schools to adopt and adjust as they seem fit.
- Providing guidance and advice from Local Authorities and GwE for the repurposing of learners back into schools.
- Reflecting on pedagogy – for current practice and for the new curriculum.

- Providing professional learning for Teaching Assistants.
- Contributing to the national strategy of supporting NQTs during this period where their focus will be on pedagogy and research due to not being able to have class access.
- A walk through guide with raising awareness activities for teachers on the Curriculum for Wales.
- Developing and delivering webinars tailor made for head teachers around Change Management, developing a school vision, creating time and space for PL, Planning for Curriculum Change and Leading Pedagogy which will include some face to face interaction, group discussions, think pieces and video clips for reflection.