

Dear Arwyn,

During the early autumn term, the Welsh Government asked us to undertake a review of local authorities and regional consortia's work in supporting their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020.

This letter outlines the outcome of this work in GwE. The content of the letter is based on virtual meetings with officers, as well as information from a sample of schools and PRUs in the local authorities across the GwE region. We have also considered the supporting documentation provided by GwE officers and the feedback from surveys of school/PRU leaders, governors, teachers and support staff, parents and pupils. We have referred to the outcomes of the surveys where relevant, although the surveys were mainly be used to inform the national report which was published on our website on 15 January. Here is a [link](#) to that report.

We would like to thank your staff for giving of their time to discuss their work with us and for providing additional information on request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Meilyr Rowlands".

Meilyr Rowlands
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

The regional consortia's work to support schools and PRUs: March – August 2020

Leadership and collaboration

Educational portfolio holders and directors of education from the six local authorities worked with GwE to discuss the effect of the pandemic on education. They agreed a consistent regional approach to try to mitigate its effects.

GwE leaders worked closely with local authority managers to develop and share regional guidance to support schools and PRUs through the pandemic. At the beginning of the lockdown period, a communication strategy was agreed with the directors of the six local authorities and GwE. This strategy included Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) contacting schools regularly to support headteachers and alleviate concerns. Regular contact with schools in order to support the health and wellbeing of staff and pupils was a consortium priority and schools welcomed this approach. In a number of instances, the consortium deployed its staff to a local authority to support with essential services or to schools and PRUs to support them to remain open.

The consortium continued to operate its governance structure from the start of lockdown. The GwE Joint Committee met virtually and considered revisions to its plans and work due to the pandemic. The Joint Committee also continued with matters that they would usually consider, such as the service's value for money and audit reports. The GwE Managing Director and the Joint Committee worked well to anticipate and plan for issues proactively. For example, they discussed establishing a regional approach to the transition of pupils back into schools in good time before any final decisions were made nationally. This enabled local authorities, GwE and schools to prepare and respond quickly when Welsh Government instructed schools to reopen for more learners.

Schools and providers became more accustomed to working virtually, and received support from the regional consortium and local authorities to develop their ways of working. Many schools mentioned their appreciation of the regular online contact meetings with their SIA. These included meetings within school clusters across the region to share regular updates, to consider any lessons learned and to ensure headteachers were able to share any problems and concerns.

The consortium worked well nationally to develop distance learning guidance for schools in collaboration with other regions. The region has continued to look at international research and sourced external advice to improve practice.

Promoting learning

From March 2020, GwE adapted its work to focus on five distinct phases. These were the pre-lockdown phase; supporting schools at the beginning of lockdown; distance learning; supporting schools to re-open and the blended learning phase. GwE recognised that its SIAs would have an evolving role in supporting schools to develop their distance learning approaches.

GwE worked closely with its local authorities to share guidance and advice to schools during each phase. Resources, websites and professional learning materials were shared with schools including 'How to' videos to help teachers develop their approaches to distance learning. Most school leaders feel that GwE have provided helpful support through its digital platform, the 'GwE Support Centre'. This contains all the resources and materials produced by the consortium during the COVID-19 period. GwE ensured that staff and learners could access a range of classroom learning materials, such as support for maintaining and developing literacy, numeracy and digital skills. GwE established an online 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. The platform also included resources help to maintain connections between teaching and support staff during this period of potential social isolation, including support for building resilience and personal wellbeing.

GwE recognised that schools were at different stages in developing their support for distance learning and that their approach would vary according to their context and capacity. During this time, the consortium produced guidance to support effective distance learning and was proactive in helping schools produce their own distance learning models. This included exemplar models in order to share good practice across the region. Many of these were based on international research and gaining a deeper understanding of distance learning approaches and principles.

Between March and the end of May, GwE conducted an overview of the level of engagement of learners in distance learning. SIAs contacted all schools to gather feedback on the engagement of learners. Many of the SIAs had prior knowledge and information on the level of engagement and were able work collaboratively with schools. This work enabled the consortium to develop a regional overview of current practice, and to identify effective practice to inform and support regional guidance. The information helped to identify key barriers in learners' engagement and how the consortium could support schools in collaboration with local authorities and other partners. The report also identified the need to strengthen schools' tracking of the impact of engagement.

From June onwards, a key activity was to support the planning of pupils' transition back into school in a positive frame of mind, and to continue as seamlessly as possible with their learning. This included providing support to schools to ensure the health and wellbeing of learners returning to a very different classroom during the phased return and supporting teachers in the transition from consolidating previous learning to the teaching of new aspects. In addition, SIA supported schools with ideas about monitoring and giving constructive feedback on pupils' work.

GwE evaluated the capacity and ability of schools in their region to use the various learning platforms that are available. This provided the consortium with an understanding of which schools required additional support to develop their on-line distance learning resources and which members of staff required further training in using the technology. Overall, many schools within the GwE region noted that they saw value in the digital resources provided by the consortium during this period. A number of headteachers identified that their staff have become more confident in using technology and that its increased use had a positive impact on learning overall.

The continued support for professional learning was appreciated by many schools. For example, GwE provided support for teaching assistants (TAs) through the development of an online classroom, which included a suite of professional development opportunities. Schools were also positive about SIAs' support to subject areas in the secondary sector and their regular meetings with groups of subject teachers. The consortium has also invested in engaging its own staff in professional learning to develop their understanding of distance learning, including researching best practice national and internationally.

Local authorities within the region spoke of their open and positive relationship with GwE, whom they consider to have been at the forefront of developing the continuity of learning support and guidance for schools. Local authorities believe that at the end of June, when many pupils' returned to schools, and subsequently at the beginning of September, the consortium provided valuable support. For example, GwE provided support and guidance so that staff, pupils and parents could get used to new routines designed to keep everyone safe for re-opening schools.

At a national level, GwE worked closely with the other regional consortia to develop a collegiate response to these very challenging circumstances. GwE leaders and staff maintained regular discussions and collaboration with Welsh Government on delivering the Continuity for Learning Plan and have been involved in supporting most of the key deliverables. GwE was a key driver for developing and publishing a blended learning guidance and exemplar blended learning models in collaboration with Estyn and the other regional consortia.

Supporting vulnerable learners

On 23rd March, schools were re-purposed to support pupils of key workers and some vulnerable learners. In response, GwE adapted their work in order to continue to provide services and support for schools within its region. Regional and local roles were identified in order to support vulnerable learners and GwE staff accessed further professional development and training to help them support school leadership in these areas.

During this period, GwE supported schools and local authorities with a focus on the safety and wellbeing of pupils and the workforce. A key driver for this work was to ensure support for the physical and mental wellbeing of pupils and young people, including preparing for them to return to school with motivation and enthusiasm to

learn. The consortium's SIAs ensured regular contact with the headteacher of their link schools, to check on their wellbeing and to ensure that they received appropriate support.

The regional consortium notes that at the time, the logistics of opening schools to all learners for the 'Check in, catch up' period were complicated. GwE's Management Board were committed to working in partnership across the region to adopt a consistent approach in developing a supportive framework to help schools during this period. As part of this, GwE's SIAs worked with local authority representatives to formulate a return to school plan. This aimed to support all schools in the region to ensure they had the right policies in place and a comprehensive risk assessment that they could tailor to the circumstances in their own school. GwE worked with the local authorities in the region to develop a common approach to risk assessment. This acted as a guide for school leaders to plan for reopening schools and PRUs for the 'Check in, catch up' period and for reopening fully in September. The risk assessment framework is presented as a dashboard and includes policies, documentation and checklists. This was regularly updated as Welsh Government guidance was issued. Local authorities' corporate health and safety officers quality assured and tested the procedures to address concerns and issues. School leaders note that they appreciate the consistent approach across their local authority area and region and in particular, the dashboard developed by GwE. In addition, they were positive about the helpful communication channels, including the headteacher fora.

The consortium worked in partnership with local authority officers such as the inclusion teams, human resource and transport to consider learners' needs and appropriate learning experiences, in particular, to support their health and wellbeing. GwE SIAs and local authorities continued to work closely with schools as they worked to adapt their settings to be as safe as possible for their learners.

The regional consortium's work to support its schools and PRUs from September 2020

Leadership and collaboration

In preparation for the full return of pupils to schools and PRUs in September, GwE revised its work plan, adapting its priorities to meet the needs of schools.

GwE continued to work closely with local authorities, schools and PRUs. Evidence from our engagement calls suggest that schools value the support and training given by regional SIA on teaching and learning, and in particular the guidance on blended and digital learning.

GwE has been a key driver in helping disseminate information and guidance to schools. For example, through its 'universal wellbeing and learner support

dashboard' a professional learning directory was developed and a range of guidance was shared with all schools across the region. This was communicated through the cluster approach and with officers within each local authority. At the beginning of the lockdown period, a minority of schools communicated that they had difficulties in getting to the right information promptly. This led to GwE making adaptations to the website and since September, most schools are complimentary about using the dashboard and the accessibility of other sources of information from GwE and their local authority. Overall, communication and access to information has improved considerably during this period.

The regional 'Return to School Group', with representatives of the six local authorities and GwE, has been a useful conduit to steer a co-ordinated approach to respond to COVID-19 challenges across the region.

Cameo: Regional 'Return to School Group'

The aim of establishing the group was to develop a consistent, cohesive and collaborative regional approach to respond to COVID-19 challenges across all six local authorities. The group aimed to:

- provide all schools with timely and appropriate support
- ensure all learners were kept safe and well during this period
- promote a high quality learning offer (through distance and blended learning)
- ensure that clear communication channels are established to allow two-way flow of information across the region – with schools and the wider community
- listen to the voice of headteachers
- support the wellbeing of headteachers and staff of schools
- provide schools with a comprehensive framework to support the work in restarting schools, including support on risk assessments
- re-focus the work of GwE team members where needed to support local authority colleagues.

During this period the group:

- worked in partnership to offer schools a risk assessment matrix for primary, secondary, special and PRU settings
- developed a dashboard of resources with regional and national guidance to act as a 'one stop shop' for all schools to access
- collaboratively wrote COVID-19 amendments or appendices to existing policies for use by all schools across the region
- developed a communication strategy for the work of the group based on three pillars of 'inform, support, listen'
- co-ordinated contributions from regional sub-groups to provide consistent and timely messaging to schools on human resource guidance, transport, and learner support to include universal and targeted wellbeing support
- supported all schools with resources to develop blended learning as part of promoting high-quality learning provision for all learners across all schools

- supported all schools with resources to support the planning of accelerating learning

In our contact with schools and local authorities within the region, many appreciated the co-ordinated approach during this period. The facilitating and strengthening of collaboration and team-working at many levels between the local authorities and GwE has had a positive impact on schools across the north Wales region. Some schools have commented that they now have a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities around addressing issues with the pandemic and appreciate being able to work collaboratively across clusters to share, and have access to, expertise. A few headteachers noted that keeping learners and staff focused on reopening schools built confidence among school leaders, staff and families.

To ensure continuity for their learners, planning for different scenarios, on several levels has also been a key activity of local authority and GwE leaders since September. Leaders identified the need to support and prepare schools for possible future eventualities beyond their control. Through this, GwE and the local authorities encouraged schools to reflect on lessons learnt from the lockdown period and scenario plan for a potential further lockdown. Since the return in September, many schools have faced different challenges, for example with pupils at home self-isolating. The various scenarios included considering what learning could look like in different contexts, a fully open school, to one where all pupils are learning at home. This helped the consortium and schools consider the robustness of their distance and blended learning models.

GwE senior leaders are proactive in continuing to provide direction and vision to support leaders in schools. In particular, they are aware that headteachers, school leaders and education officers are presently working under difficult circumstances. All SIAs have continued their regular contact with the headteachers of their link schools, to check on their wellbeing and to ensure that they receive the assistance they need. To support this further, a series of workshops are available to school leaders and education officers with a focus on their wellbeing, such as on developing resilience, adapting to a changing environment and personal reflection. This continuing support of the workforce demonstrates a sound awareness by leaders in GwE and the local authorities of their likely wellbeing and development needs in the near future.

GwE provided advice and guidance to headteachers so that they could consider how to adjust their schools' strategic plans under the current circumstances. Although reviewing progress against the 2019-20 school development plans remains statutory, the consortium notes that most schools have taken a measured approach by reviewing their priorities up to March 2020. The consortium provided additional guidance to school leaders on the possible content of their school development plans to enable them to report on progress beyond March. This included possibilities for schools to consider the progress around their work on distance learning, staff professional learning and curriculum adjustments in line with what they needed to address during the pandemic.

Promoting learning

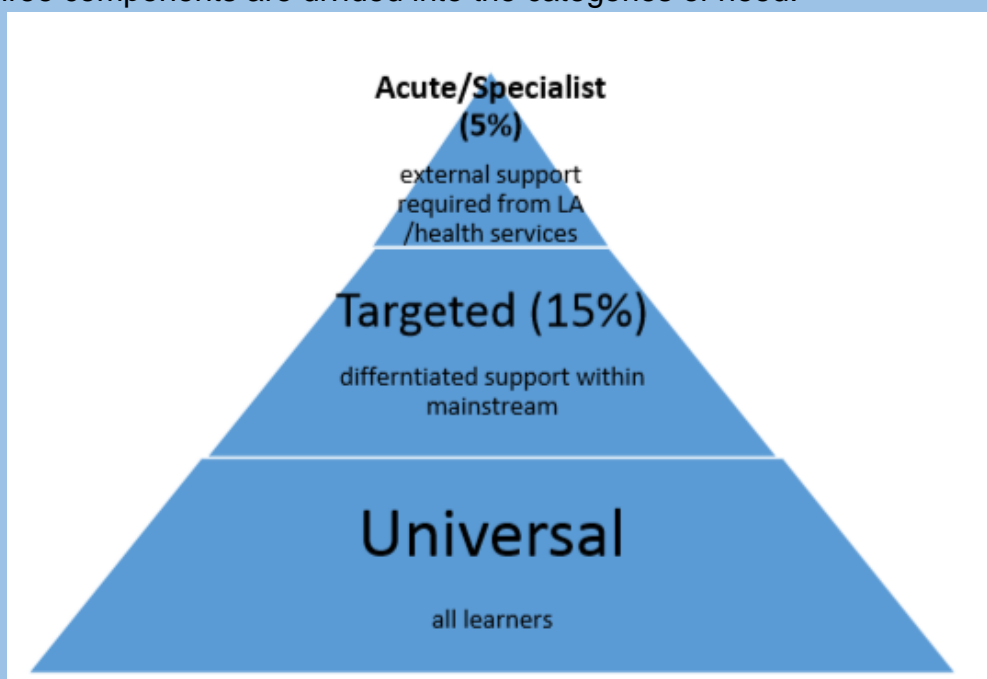
During the summer term and over the summer holidays, GwE and the local authorities worked with schools and PRUs to support their planning for the return to school in September.

Cameo: Re-starting learning model for North Wales

GwE developed a regional model, with local authorities and schools, to ensure that the individual needs of learners could be met, with consideration to their local context. The model evaluated the school's preparedness and approach to ensure learning for all pupils continued. It focused on three inter-related components that assess pupils' fitness for learning. The three components are:

- emotional and mental wellbeing
- health and physical fitness
- core skills of numeracy and literacy, independence skills, and readiness for new learning.

The three components are divided into the categories of need:



Source: GwE regional consortium

Schools needed to ensure that they could offer provision for their learners against each area to ensure equity and equality. Responsibility for supporting schools to deliver each element was agreed between local authorities, GwE and other agencies to plan appropriate provision to meet all learners' needs.

The model aims to support schools to assist learners to return to 'learning fitness' and to develop learning which allows pupils to continue to make progress. Ensuring coherence for learners between in-school and distance learning is

another key element of the model including developing appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements were disapplied.

Many local authorities and schools praised GwE's role in co-ordinating partnership work between schools and PRUs, on a cluster level in primary schools and by geographic proximity in the secondary sector. This approach has meant that schools and PRUs are able to receive valuable curricular support from their SIA, whilst turning to local authority officers for operational support.

GwE is continuing to work with local authorities to support schools and PRUs to develop a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils. During our engagement calls, many schools felt that they have been well supported by GwE and their local authority during this period. Headteachers were consistent in their view that GwE has supported schools to deliver as broad a curriculum as possible, despite the constraints. Many primary schools have adapted their plans from September to include a greater emphasis on activities that promote learner wellbeing. In many schools, this meant adjusting the theme or topic that they had planned to cover during this term. Most schools have also placed a greater emphasis on increasing their focus on developing pupils' core skills. Nonetheless, a few lead primary SIAs note that there has generally been a narrowing of the curriculum. GwE has shared new models of delivery with primary headteachers to try to counteract this issue.

Headteachers in secondary schools report that in a few subjects, teachers are finding working within the COVID-19 period challenging, particularly in providing pupils with opportunities to complete practical work, for example in design and technology, science, art, music and physical education. Schools have generally adapted their provision to cope with these difficulties. In some secondary schools, leaders have adjusted their timetable to run more double lessons. This allows schools to respond to health and safety guidance while maintaining a balanced curriculum. In a few schools, departments have adapted their schemes of work to overcome practical difficulties such as not being able to use specialist rooms.

This term, SIAs and local authority education officers have continued to work together to add to the range of teaching and learning materials that are accessible to teachers and support staff through the GwE online platform. Headteachers report that these resources provide valuable support to their staff. GwE officers explained that many secondary schools have made use of resources and in particular, they have accessed multi-disciplinary units of work that fit in well with the principles of Curriculum for Wales. Many authorities relay that GwE has promoted co-operation and collaboration between schools and within schools on a departmental basis. This term, teachers within the region are sharing resources based on each area of learning and experience to address the need to support a wide and enriched curriculum model.

Many schools that Estyn have engaged with mentioned that during the initial return of their pupils in September, a significant number needed further support to catch-up with their literacy and numeracy skills. In particular, schools in the region noted that a continued focus on re-establishing pupils' Welsh oracy skills was a priority. To

address this, GwE co-ordinated opportunities for Welsh-medium schools to work across local authority areas to develop and share resources. For example, Welsh-medium secondary schools from Wrexham, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy have worked together to develop resources to support pupils' oracy skills. Over time, GwE and its schools have built a sound collection of resources available online for both schools and parents within the region. These include a series of Welsh language resources for schools teaching Welsh as a second language and bilingual resources for non-Welsh speaking parents. GwE has also raised awareness of additional materials available. For example, they have promoted 'Y Pair' as a network in Hwb established to share Welsh language resources adapted for distance and blended learning and 'Y Gist' as a network for Welsh as a second language teachers. Overall, as the autumn term has progressed, a few headteachers feel that Welsh language skills have recovered well, especially in the case of older pupils.

In our survey of school leaders, many noted that they receive useful information from GwE on approaches to distance and blended learning. Overall, these responses were more positive in the GwE region than in the other three consortia. Many schools and PRUs have found the information, resources and examples of practice for distance and blended learning produced by GwE useful as a starting point to develop their own practice. Information and professional learning has been shared through a range of fora and networks. These include cluster meetings, meetings for headteachers, subject specific fora and teaching and learning groups. GwE has offered webinars and surgery sessions to share resources and to develop teachers' understanding of effective online and distance teaching and learning. In addition, GwE has offered training for teaching assistants through an online platform. Many schools and PRUs have used the resources as a basis for their own package of professional learning to support teachers and teaching assistants' digital competency. Generally, school leaders note that staff have developed their digital skills and are better placed to offer a range of online learning experiences if pupils need to learn from home.

Cameo: An approach to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of distance learning

Following cluster meetings with the regional school improvement service to discuss distance and blended learning, one school trialled using a digital distance learning approach while pupils were in class. One group of pupils completed activities and tasks online while the teacher used direct instruction with other pupils. This allowed teachers to support pupils to use software and upload work to a digital platform while they were in school. It also allowed the school to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and tasks set as distance learning. The school is adapting its approach following feedback from this process.

As expected, many learners required additional support to accelerate their learning when they returned to schools. As a result, GwE and its stakeholders recognised the need to identify effective teaching strategies to support schools and learners.

Through a review of research literature, together with research undertaken within schools in the region, GwE developed a guide to help schools identify the most effective teaching strategies and online programmes that could help schools improve pupils' core skills. In particular, GwE and the schools within the region focused on improving pupils' reading skills, including their comprehension, fluency and vocabulary skills along with improving their numeracy skills. Some of these strategies and support materials have been specifically designed to be used in schools and by parents at home to support, their child's learning. Many of the resources and strategies stem from recent collaborative research projects undertaken with GwE schools through the Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (CIEREI) which is a partnership between Bangor University and GwE.

In a few local authorities, senior leaders are keen for local authority and GwE officers to increase their role in monitoring and quality assurance so that officers gain a secure understanding of the quality of provision across their schools. Many schools have made use of pre-lockdown assessments to identify how pupils' skills have developed during home learning. SIAs have encouraged schools to consider a wide range of evidence from September in order to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Schools note that they have had helpful discussions with SIAs about making use of the lessons learnt in terms of pupil progress in recent months. For example, it seems that some pupils have made sound progress because they were provided with a broad range of open-ended activities, which gave beneficial opportunities for them to make their own choices.

The 'normal' professional learning offer has been modified to ensure that schools and settings receive relevant and purposeful support. This has enabled them to adapt to the challenging circumstances. In our engagement with schools, most headteachers have praised the content of the professional learning offered by GwE during this period. For example, they have provided training through webinars on specific accelerated learning methods based on research at the University of Bangor. Another example is how the middle leadership programme has been tailored to address how to lead at times of crisis and change. The professional learning offer prioritised supporting schools to improve the digital skills of their staff and enabling them to develop effective distance and blended learning approaches and more effective learner engagement.

The regional consortium offer a wide range of opportunities for schools to participate in specific professional learning opportunities to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and accelerated learning strategies. This includes, the extensive SAFMEDS (Say All Fast Minute Every Day Shuffled) project to improve pupils basic mathematics fluency skills using an evidence-based teaching strategy. Other support programme for schools include a comprehensive range of training materials and resources such as a bilingual literacy toolkit, to support the literacy skills development of pupils. GwE has been training members of staff who then relay that training to others in schools and PRUs. Leaders and school staff benefit from training through webinars, networks of subject leaders, and meetings between teaching and learning leaders.

Resources for promoting literacy and numeracy have been shared through each co-ordinator. GwE is facilitating work between schools to share good practice and ideas on teaching and learning through the current pandemic. There is also support for schools to reflect on the quality of provision during the lockdown period and to use this information as they prepare for the delivery of Curriculum for Wales. Headteachers note that these resources give them a firm foundation to observe models of effective practice.

Many of the region's local authorities believe that schools and the regional consortium have changed their way of working, in many ways for the better. In particular, these local authorities are positive about the developments in ICT and acknowledge that improving ICT capacity has been a steep learning curve for everyone. They also see that more extensive professional learning opportunities are available through using a range of digital platforms. Many schools and local authorities report that staff are more likely to engage in optional professional learning activities when they can access it remotely and at a time that suits them.

Supporting vulnerable learners

GwE SIA, in collaboration with local authority officers, have given purposeful support to headteachers and school staff to promote wellbeing and, at a suitable time, begin to consider provision and learning. Headteachers identified that SIAs have provided an effective balance between support for learner wellbeing and guidance on learning during this term. They say that schools are feeling immense strain in getting the balance right between school improvement and prioritising staff and learner wellbeing.

The region's SIA with responsibility for vulnerable groups has provided purposeful resources for schools and parents and these are available on each of the local authorities' SEN and Inclusion websites. This SIA attends half-termly meetings with the education officers of each local authority and representatives from children's services in order to gather important information on aspects of learning needing further support. This has resulted in a more targeted approach to support.

GwE officers have collaborated with schools and local authorities in a range of fora. For example, officers contributed to the work of the regional ALN/Inclusion Group and produced content for the online dashboard. They also facilitated a regional shared drive of information and resources between all six of the local authorities. GwE SIAs continue to attend local authority wellbeing and safeguarding groups to share practice and information, and also the regional quality group to collaborate with the work of supporting children who are looked after.

During our engagement calls with schools, headteachers were positive about the support and advice provided by GwE to help them plan how to use the 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: the accelerating learning programme (RRRS)' grant. Local authorities are responsible for monitoring the expenditure, compliance and ensuring that plans are sustainable, whereas consortium officers generally take the lead on advising schools about appropriate and effective provision.

GwE leaders have communicated that headteachers are best placed to prioritise how this additional grant funding should be spent. Support and advice is available to schools but SIAs and local authorities are keen to provide autonomy for schools to develop their own ideas about exactly how to target the grant. GwE provided a pro-forma for schools and received their plans, which were then agreed with the local authority. GwE has created a helpful dashboard and a bank of documentation and resources on their website linked to the RRRS grant so that schools can access information quickly to get ideas on grant spending, such as support for running small intervention groups. GwE are also aware of the need to support and advise some schools more closely, to ensure that the funding is used to maximum impact.

GwE are working alongside their local authority colleagues as they develop a single method of monitoring RRRS expenditure across the six north Wales authorities. In addition, it is expected that schools should show that their plans are sustainable. Some small schools told us that they have had difficulty in recruiting staff, as the grant funding will only sustain provision for a limited number of additional hours. According to SIAs, most of the smaller schools are using the grant to top up the hours of employment of existing members of staff, and providing them with training so that they will continue to benefit from the expertise when the funding ends.

Nationally, GwE officers have contributed to the work of various working groups with a focus on wellbeing and vulnerable learners. For example, a SIA with responsibility for wellbeing contributed to the national PDG Group with Welsh Government to ensure regular communication, to update on regional developments and share information back within the consortium.

GwE has supported local authorities and schools to respond to the wellbeing needs of vulnerable pupils, especially in providing complimentary professional learning for staff. The consortium has worked in collaboration with individual schools, clusters of schools and local authorities to support a universal and targeted approach to learner and staff wellbeing. It has structured this professional learning offer to support the learning in the schools. With the wellbeing of the learner central to the offer, schools can benefit from the resources and strategies in the universal offer which is available to all schools or opt for a targeted offer. To date, many schools have trialled, shared and benefitted from observing examples of effective practice from schools in their local authority and across the region. The practical intervention resources for schools to utilise, underpinned by the 'Five principles to support home learning' [EEF, 2020], are a focus of SIAs conversations with schools as they plan and deliver their accelerated learning programmes.

A good example of a professional learning offer is the 'Return to school trauma-informed schools programme'. Through this programme, whole school sessions are facilitated about the impact of the pandemic and analysis of strategies that schools could consider using as their learners returned. This included key teaching and learning principles and models. A number of schools commented on this programme and noted that it was helpful to increase the number of staff who are trauma-informed and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) aware. These schools

also mentioned that teaching staff became more confident in assisting learners and identifying suitable support and provision.