



Review of GwE current operating arrangements and staffing structure

Draft Terms of Reference

Background and context

Staff in the Local Authorities and GwE adapted their work in order to continue to provide effective services and support for all their school communities during the COVID pandemic. During this time, GwE in close partnership with the North Wales Local Authorities kept true to their vision and values as an organisation that is continually learning. The OECD's transversal themes of Trust, Thinking Together, Time and Technology remained at the heart of the work with schools and partners. The service in its entirety had to re-focus several times during the COVID period to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders. The ability to be flexible and agile and to work effectively together in different teams, often cross sector, had significant impact on organisational behaviour and external perception. As we continue to support schools in the wake of the pandemic, it is timely to review the current operating arrangements and staffing structure to ensure that we continue to evolve and develop in order to effectively support schools post COVID.

As we undertake national reform and continue to support schools to implement the new curriculum, it's clear that we are in a different place to the one that we imagined when the guidance for the Curriculum for Wales was published. We recognise that some of the preparation time for the curriculum will have been devoted to managing the impact of the pandemic over the past few years. On the other hand, with an even stronger focus on well-being and significant investment in teaching and learning, the values under-pinning the

curriculum have been at the heart of how schools have been working. GwE is fully committed to supporting schools and PRUs to maintain this momentum to ensure that every learner in North Wales is offered provision of the highest quality. We have recognised that our Professional Learning will need to evolve to offer a more limited centrally delivered provision with an enhanced school to school (and cluster to cluster) professional learning offer. We see the following areas as our key regional Professional Learning Offer over the next few years: Improving Learner Skills; Improving the Learner Experience; Pedagogy; Equity and Wellbeing; '*Y Gymraeg*'; Assessment and Learner Progression and Leadership Development. Professional learning will be key in supporting schools to implement and move forward their School Development Plan priorities. A support plan will be agreed with every school and setting in line with the requirements of the School Improvement Guidance (June 2022).

The new national 'School Improvement Guidance (June 2022)' provides a point of reference for schools, pupil referral units, local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional consortia and Estyn, which outlines the Welsh Government's expectations of them in contributing to school improvement, in the context of their wider legal duties. The overarching purpose of school improvement is to help schools give learners the best possible learning experiences and outcomes, whatever their background, to achieve high standards and aspirations for all. Under the Curriculum for Wales, a fundamental part of this will be ensuring that schools support every learner to make progress, contributing to the four purposes. The guidance supports that objective by setting out a framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability that will deliver sustainable school improvement and drive behaviours and practices that are required by the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. To be successful, it is crucial that all aspects of the school system are aligned with and support the new curriculum and its underlying principles. The Welsh Government plans to update the guidance, building on learning in 2022/23 and 2023/24, and to issue it as statutory guidance to come into force in September 2024. It is therefore timely that GwE reviews its operational arrangements and staffing structure to ensure that it can effectively address the requirements of the guidance.

Welsh Government have proposed to undertake a 'Review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements'. All education partners at every level have a role to play in supporting schools in achieving our national mission. Within this context, a review of the future direction, roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales - the 'middle-tier' - and how they should evolve and develop school improvement arrangements is proposed. The review should show how we can best support our common purpose and shared goals within the context of a self-improving system.

The middle-tier includes the Local Authorities, Regional Consortia and Partnerships, Diocesan Authorities, Estyn, Qualifications Wales, the National Academy for Educational Leadership, the Education Workforce Council, further and higher education and examination boards.

RATIONALE

A review of the current operating arrangements and staffing structure is needed to ensure that the regional school improvement service is suitably structured to:

- ensure that schools are effectively supported post COVID to address the impact of the pandemic on learners' progress and wellbeing;
- ensure that schools are effectively supported to implement the new curriculum and all aspects of the reform journey;
- address national expectations for school improvement as outlined in the recently published 'School Improvement Guidance (June 2022)'; and to
- build upon the strong foundations of a collaborative way of working that has been established regionally as we move towards a self-improving system.
- to set out what an effective school improvement service and self-improving system should look like for the future.
- evolve and develop school improvement arrangements as proposed in Welsh Government review.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Review current structure to ensure that statutory and accountability duties are met.
2. Review current structure to ensure that it meets Welsh Government and Regional direction in going forward.
3. To clarify the roles and responsibilities of the GwE and partners; identifying areas of shared endeavour and any gaps in provision and providing unambiguous descriptions of responsibility and accountability for each organisation and partner.
4. To establish in clear terms the roles, responsibilities and accountability in relation to areas such as ALN, Y Gymraeg, Governors, staff and learner wellbeing.
5. Further evolve and strengthen the current partnership working with Local Authorities to provide clarity, reduce duplication and bureaucracy, and to further improve effectiveness of delivery.
6. Ensure that the service is suitably structured to focus on support and on capacity-building for a self-improving system.
7. Continue to promote and facilitate collaboration within and between clusters/alliances of schools and with wider networking.
8. Ensure effective and early identification of a school in decline and in need of support to prevent it becoming SCC. Ensure that processes and systems for supporting and challenging SCC are aligned with expectations in school improvement guidance.
9. Ensure effective communication and sharing of information and successful practice across the region to ensure appropriate support and challenge.
10. Ensure that the Regional School Improvement Service is best placed to contribute at local, regional and national level.
11. To ensure that the Welsh Government and GwE reviews are closely aligned and complementary.
12. Ensure that the organisational structures' accompanying salaries are competitive with similar organisations to allow future successful succession planning and attract high quality staff.

ISSUES TO EXPLORE

Consideration will also need to be given to other matters in the review. These could include:

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- Review the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) to ensure delivery of functions collectively and effectively.
 - Creating a succession plan for the service to ensure that GwE has appropriate and effective school improvement and business structures, that provides positive impact and value for money.
 - GwE salary structure has not been reviewed since being established in 2013. In light of this, and following the recent school staffing salary settlement, there is a need to review regional salary structures to ensure that it is competitive and current.
 - To consider how the current regional structure is fit for purpose to effectively support the reform programme - particularly in relation to the Curriculum for Wales, changes to school improvement guidance and the ALN transformation programme -, to ensure what is needed is delivered effectively.
 - Review joint working with other agencies and partnerships.
 - Ensure flexible and agile working model to respond urgently to potential reduction in grants and core budget.
 - To consider how resources and expertise within the service may be used to generate income

SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO INFORM THE REVIEW

- Current published roles and responsibilities
 - Existing legislation, policy and guidance documents, and Estyn inspection information
 - Local Authority arrangements with Regional Consortia and Partnerships
 - Governance and host authority arrangements and support within other similar organisations.
 - Organisational structures, succession planning and comparative salaries across similar organisations.
 - Regional Consortia and Partnerships
 - Welsh Government arrangements with every organisation
 - Latest research relating to school improvement services
 - School / practitioner experiences and insights
 - Views of / evidence from key partners from within the Welsh education system
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- Local, regional, national and international successful practice.

TIMING

To commence in the summer term 2023 with initial findings in July and final report in the Autumn term of 2024.

UNDERTAKING THE REVIEW

Team to consist of:

- Lead / Author
- Project Manager
- Local Authority representatives
- Independent Finance expert
- GwE link officer
- School representatives to challenge early findings

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