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National model for regional working

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Guidance

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National model for regional working

Audience	Regional consortia, chief executives and directors of education in county and county borough councils in Wales; diocesan authorities; headteachers and governing bodies of maintained schools in Wales; other national and local bodies concerned with education in Wales.
Overview	The National model for regional working outlines our vision of regional school improvement consortia as well as the relative roles of each tier (schools, local authorities, and regional consortia) within the education system. This document was updated in October 2015.
Action required	None – for information only.
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Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.gov.wales/educationandskills

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Introduction

The National Model for Regional Working was initially developed and agreed in autumn 2013 in order to accelerate changes already underway. It signaled a deeper commitment to regional working and emphasised a model of school improvement, based on mutual support that was largely new across most of Wales. It emphasised the structures and approaches that were needed at that time to embed these changes.

As we anticipate a period of further change for local authorities, and during this time of austerity measures, it is important that the national model is seen as a guiding document to ensure that we continue to make progress in the field of school improvement, whilst acknowledging that there will be both structural and operational variations between the four regions, and that this flexibility is necessary to ensure that consortia are able to meet the distinct needs of their own regions.

This new iteration of the national model also seeks to capture the important progress made by consortia in the period since the model was first developed and published. This update to the model reflects what has become custom and practice for consortia and seeks to record it formally within the model. So for example, this updated version reflects the implementation of the National School Categorisation system, and reflects that the concept of Challenge Advisers is now embedded within our system.

This version of the national model also seeks to better reflect the current context that the consortia operate within rather than continuing to reflect the context of 2013/2014.

There are however elements of this contextual information that are themselves currently in development. At present the education system within Wales is responding to significant changes such as the Government's acceptance of the recommendations from Professor Donaldson's Successful Futures report and the ongoing work in respect of the Minister's commitment to a New Deal for the teaching profession.

Furthermore, working with regional consortia, the Welsh Government is taking the lead role in Schools Challenge Cymru. The programme is targeted at 40 Pathways to Success schools facing challenges in their circumstances and stage of development. The schools are receiving additional resources and expertise to undertake a programme of swift, sustainable improvement. The Challenge aims to empower and equip these Pathways to Success Schools to be able to achieve continuous self-improvement by building on existing good practice, mobilising additional support and monitoring the impact of their efforts. Roles and responsibilities have been disseminated to all partners and Welsh Government will continue to work with consortia as the programme develops.

Not all elements of the consortia role with these developments are able to be fully articulated within this document at this time. However the commitment to regional consortia as the central pillars of the school improvement system within Wales remains. It is intended that the consortia will play a key role in taking forward the significant developments for our education system over the coming years.

1. The mission, values and principles of effective school improvement

The vision and the purpose

Wales needs for its future success young people who are clever, skilled, happy and healthy, and an educational system that helps to produce them. This agreement is designed to generate this through further developing the way that local authorities, regional consortia and the Welsh Government work together to support school leaders, governors and teachers and, through this process, helping to create excellent learning, in excellent classrooms in excellent schools. Our intention for Wales is to create a self-improving education system with collaboration between all elements of the system, regional and national, at its heart.

The national model is a shared endeavour between schools, their leaders and governors, local authorities, regional consortia and the Welsh Government. The model also seeks to ensure that everyone operating in the system has a recognised role. This includes important stakeholders and key educational organisations such as Diocesan bodies, Estyn, workforce representatives and the Education Workforce Council. It recognises the important role each tier has to play in improving outcomes for children and young people. The national model creates the structures and defines the framework within which this partnership functions but it requires a shared commitment and moral purpose for the system as a whole to deliver the improvements in education and life chances that all children in Wales deserve.

Local authorities retain the statutory responsibility for schools and school improvement. The national model is based on a vision of regional school improvement consortia working on behalf of local authorities to lead, orchestrate and co-ordinate the improvement in the performance of schools and education of young people. The prime mission and purpose of regional consortia is to help those who educate our children and young people. So, their job is to support schools and local authorities in their efforts to:

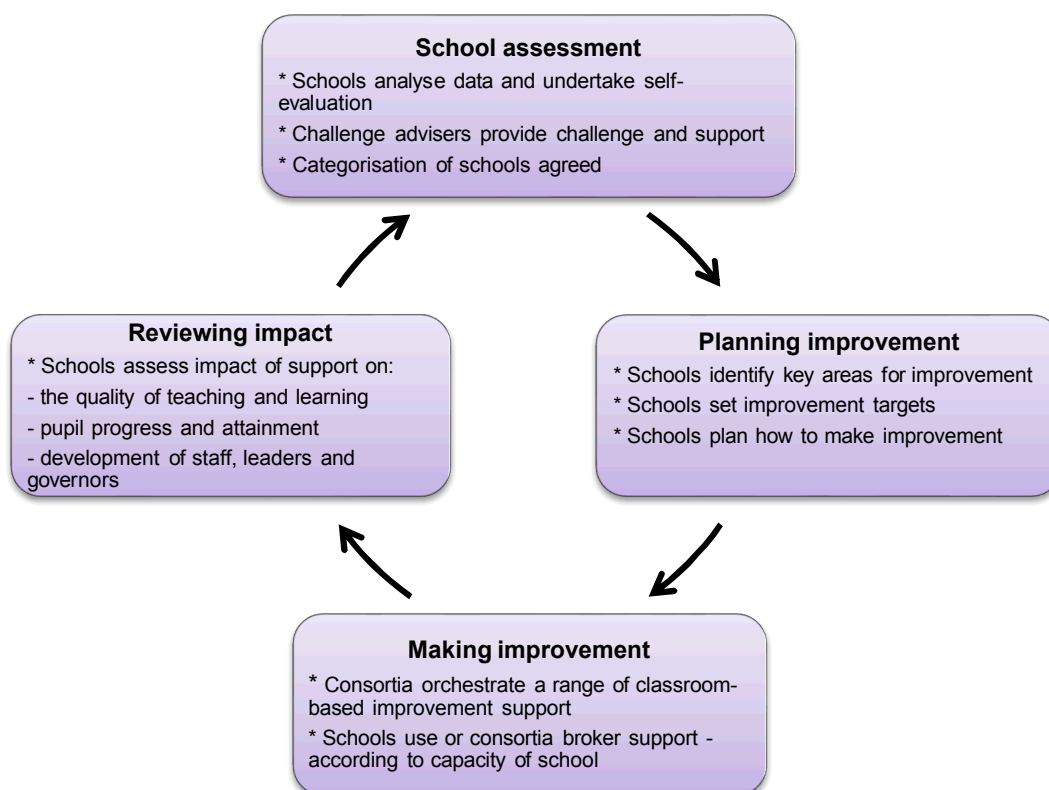
- improve learner outcomes for all young people;
- ensure the delivery of high quality teaching and learning; and
- support and empower school leaders to better lead their schools.

Model and key principles of school improvement

Schools are at the heart of the national model. It is the job of governors, school leaders, teachers and other staff to set high expectations of pupils, constantly seek to improve the quality of teaching and learning, raise standards, share good practice and learn from one another through genuine partnerships and school-to-school support arrangements. Figure 1 describes an annual cycle of school improvement, which we believe should be adopted

by all schools in order to inform their school development plans. It is a model that many schools will recognise and already follow.

Figure 1: Annual cycle of school improvement



Step 1: School assessment

Schools need to know themselves and to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Assessment is a constant process for teachers, school leaders and governors based upon self-evaluation and school categorisation.

School self-evaluation

Self-evaluation in our best schools is an ongoing process that represents an embedded culture of evaluation and improvement. It is not a singular annual activity but a continuous part of the improvement process.

Self-evaluation involves all areas of learning and all aspects of a school's life. It should provide a systematic programme of activities through which a school audits how it is performing for all its learners. We need to ensure that schools have the capacity to do this and that clear systems of core, simple and powerful data are available to support this process including benchmarking data so that schools can compare themselves against both the best schools and those within their family of schools. The more that schools can 'own' this

process, with help as necessary, the better the process will work and contribute to making the school as good as it can be for its pupils. Challenge Advisers within consortia provide challenge and assure the integrity of this process – particularly for those schools that need most support.

Step 2: Planning improvement

Schools should use self-evaluation, and the strengths and weaknesses that become apparent during the process, to inform the changes needed over the coming period and reflect these in their school development plans. These ideas will often naturally come from schools and stakeholders (such as staff, learners, governors, etc.), but the process can be facilitated by making available 'good practice' in areas such as teaching and learning from other schools. Schools, which are at risk of causing concern or who cause concern, will receive the support they need to do this from challenge advisers.

Schools should set targets by which they can measure their improvement. The targets should cover both improvement in process – for example, the quality of teaching and learning, marking of books or feedback – and outcomes in terms of improvements in attainment and progress. The job of challenge advisers will be to challenge headteachers and governors to set aspirational targets that ensure high levels of motivation and significantly improved pupil attainment.

Step 3: Making improvement

Enabling and supporting schools to access, share and use a range of proven and new classroom-based approaches should be at the heart of securing the improvements that schools need to make. This will include development programmes that align training for teachers with them working in groups to observe and coach each other on implementing improved practice, and the deployment of lead practitioners. Every school also has within itself good practice that can be used as the basis for 'within school' transfer and school-to-school improvement activity. More schools will be in federations and still more in clusters. Through these arrangements, executive headship will grow to maximise the value and potential of our best school leaders. Local authorities may also see benefits of such changes in organisational and governance terms as part of school improvement.

Consortia now facilitate and orchestrate this collaboration. There are also programmes at consortia level that draw on the expertise of the best practitioners and schools in the region. There will be help from the private sector, the voluntary sector and indeed local communities that can be matched with the needs of schools and their teachers. The higher and further education sectors will also possess many individuals and courses that can help teacher and school development. Whatever the source of the help, it is essential that it is tailored to the social, linguistic, and cultural context of every school.

Schools that have the capacity to do so should be encouraged and empowered to lead their own improvement and deploy their own resources accordingly. For those schools that are at risk of causing concern or who cause concern, it is the job of the consortia to help match and broker the support needed by the school to the best support available.

School leadership at all levels (including governors) should be nurtured and developed through training programmes, coaching, assigning mentors and providing opportunities for emerging leaders to be seconded to other schools.

Step 4: Reviewing impact

Schools, teachers and consortia should consider the effects of their actions on the achievements of all their children, and then decide what changes to make in their plans and their future actions.

Consortia Cycle of Improvement

Consortia will broadly follow a similar philosophy for schools in terms of the planning and review cycle as illustrated at Figure 1. The annual cycle of school, local authority and consortium level plans align all parts of the system together.

As there is an expectation on schools to work together, collaborate and share, likewise there is a commitment that consortia will work together to share their practises and collaborate on a cross regional and national basis. Consortia have a responsibility to work collectively together across regional boundaries, sharing their own good practise and ensuring that efficiencies and successful strategies and approaches are disseminated wider than their own regional footprint.

The role of regional consortia in implementing this model

The delivery of consortia services should be based on co-construction with schools with a move to shared data systems, underpinned by excellence of expertise in analysing and challenging schools' improvement needs. The delivery of consortia services should not be based on employing large numbers of full time staff – rather a core staff should draw on the skills of the best practitioners in their regions along with other school improvement experts and should use budgets flexibly to commission the support schools require.

Relationships and lines of accountability between local authorities and regional consortia should be clear so that everyone in the education system understands who is responsible for what.

Local consortia arrangements must also ensure meaningful engagement with other key stakeholders such as diocesan bodies, workforce unions and post-16 providers and consider how best to incorporate representation from these stakeholders into their consultative and governance arrangements.

The implementation of this model will change over time as our system continues to mature. As schools and teachers develop and gain knowledge and confidence, they will expect more independence, autonomy and space to make their own decisions. As with other improvement mechanisms, regional consortia will themselves develop and in the longer term will change from their present form because schools and school leaders will challenge and support each other in a self improving system.

2. The scope of regional consortia

The scope of regional consortia services

It is important that there is clarity about the scope of the functions and services that regional consortia will provide.

Currently however the education system within Wales is beginning the process of implementing significant developments such the Successful Futures recommendations and the development of the “New Deal” for the education profession. Consortia have a key role in these developments. The consortia have worked closely with the Welsh Government in respect of the co-construction of the New Deal, and are integral to the current process of identifying Pioneer Schools. However, not all of the implications of these developments can be fully scoped at this time. Future updates to the model will reference and develop these areas further.

Core regional consortia services will include:

- school improvement – which is defined as challenge and support strategies delivered by regional consortia that improve the teaching and learning in classrooms and lead to improved pupil attainment and progress at all levels and in all contexts;
- data collation, analysis and application – which is defined as collating from local authorities and schools the data on school and pupil performance and progress across each region (based on the core data sets established by the Welsh Government), using that data to benchmark and challenge school performance and, with schools, set challenging targets for improvements;
- delivery of the national system for categorising schools, which has been co-constructed by Welsh Government, local authorities, consortia, unions and the profession. This system has replaced the previous individual systems developed by each consortium. This consistent national approach supports schools in their self-evaluation and development planning via a core entitlement to support;
- supporting the development of school leadership at all levels – which includes developing opportunities for emerging and senior leaders to develop their experience and expertise by having assignment and secondments in other schools, in addition to commissioning, and co-ordinating the provision of training and development programmes;
- making sure that school improvement support includes ensuring that schools are mindful of learner wellbeing and supportive of improved standards of behaviour and attendance;
- ensuring that the delivery of the national Literacy and Numeracy frameworks is effective across all schools and co-ordinate and quality assure the provision of training and development to achieve this;

- providing challenge to the performance and delivery of Foundation Phase settings and assess the need for and then commission, co-ordinate and quality assure provision of training and development support;
- aligning 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;
- working with local authorities to ensure that their plans for developing and implementing strategies for 21st Century schools go hand-in-hand with plans for school improvement;
- enabling the aims of the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES) to be delivered by ensuring the alignment of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) and the Welsh in Education Grant (WEG) across each of the local authorities within the regional consortia, so that there is consistency in the development of excellence in pedagogy not only across both the Welsh-medium and bilingual sectors, but also in the delivery of Welsh as a second language;
- devising or commissioning, coordinating and quality assuring delivery of high quality governor training and advice services including the requirements for mandatory training for governors;
- providing or ensuring the availability of specialist human resources advice to support headteachers and governing bodies in dealing with performance management and capability issues, in line with appendix 1, *The National Model for Regional Working – Revitalising People Management in Schools* which can be found at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/national-model-for-regional-working/?lang=en>; and
- ensuring that teacher assessment is undertaken accurately and consistently and that the results of teacher assessments are rigorously moderated on a regional and wider basis.

Schools have a duty to deliver an appropriate curriculum and effective personal support for each of their pupils, whatever their additional learning needs. As part of their support for schools, consortia will help schools to deliver the best for each group of learners, drawing on the best practice from special schools and mainstream providers. The consortia should make it clear in their business plans how they intend to draw on such support, and should ensure that the data systems that they adopt are inclusive of all kinds of learner characteristics. Crucially, the regional consortia will need to be clear about the way in which they work in partnership with each local authority to ensure that there is a clear link between school improvement strategies and support for the neediest learners.

The delivery of specialist services, the statementing of pupils and the legal procedures that safeguard the welfare and rights of children with special needs remain the responsibility of the local authority and consortia should ensure that their services and LA services for pupils with SEN are closely aligned.

Local authorities will also continue to be responsible for delivering – either by employing their own staff or by working in partnership with another local authority the full range of statutory duties and responsibilities in respect of education services such as the organisation of schools and school places, special educational and additional learning needs, school transport, school meals, safeguarding services, education welfare, behaviour and attendance and employees' pay and conditions of service. In some cases local authorities in a region may choose to commission elements of these functions from their consortium, however, school improvement must be at the forefront of regional consortia efforts and activity.

The sections that follow explain in more detail how regional consortia and local authorities will work together to develop an integrated system that supports schools and avoids duplication.

3. Delivery of respective regional consortia and local authority functions

The role of regional consortia

In relation to school improvement regional consortia will provide challenge and support through:

- monitoring the work and performance of schools, using all-Wales standardised data sets, projections and in-school and in-year data on pupil progress and the quality of classroom teaching and learning, to categorise a school's performance and development needs in accordance with the nationally agreed categorisation model;
- examining with school leaders and chairs of governors performance and provision at whole-school level and for different subjects, year groups and sub-categories of pupils, in order to compare the progress of individual and or groups of pupils with progress made in other comparable schools and to identify areas of underperformance and achievement gaps;
- confirming with headteachers and chairs of governors the priority areas for improvement as articulated by the school's development plan (SDP) and the strategies to be deployed to secure improvement;
- agreeing stretching targets that will raise expectations, set the standard for improving the quality of teaching and learning and provide the success criteria by which pupil attainment and progress will be judged. Where agreement cannot be reached [in respect of schools that are in an Estyn category or monitoring] the consortium will advise the local authority so that in accordance with current legislation the local authority can determine the appropriate targets;
- assessing for schools that are in special measures, require significant improvement, are subject to Estyn or local authority monitoring or otherwise identified through the categorisation process as causing serious concern, whether governors and school leadership teams have the capacity and will to lead school improvement – and making appropriate recommendations as necessary; and
- advising local authorities and diocesan authorities of situations where federation is in the best interests of schools and will lead to improved educational outcomes.
- advising LAs and diocesan authorities of those situations where statutory intervention is required and providing input on the form(s) that intervention might take whether appointment of additional governors, removing the schools delegated budget or the establishment of an interim executive board (IEB) or another appropriate measure.

These functions will be applied proportionally – that is to say those schools most in need of support will be monitored most closely. Conversely where schools are performing strongly monitoring will be light-touch in nature. These functions, rather than the delivery of school improvement programmes and initiatives, will be the main focus of challenge advisers' activity.

Challenge advisers may be employed full-time by a consortium or be brought in on a part-time basis. Challenge advisers will have the attributes and fulfil the role as outlined in the agreed National Standards for Challenge Advisers: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/raisingstandards/national-standards-for-challenge-advisers/?lang=en>

Regional consortia will share monitoring information with local authorities on a termly basis and more frequently in relation to schools that are in special measures, require significant improvement, are subject to Estyn or local authority monitoring or are otherwise identified through the categorisation process as causing serious concern (see below).

Regional consortia will also co-ordinate, broker and provide improvement support for schools. These activities will be co-constructed with headteachers and teachers. The brokerage and improvement support will be differentiated in relation to a school's capacity to improve and commission/broker its own improvement support. Where a school is assessed as performing well or having the capacity to secure its own improvement it will be free to use its budgets to draw down and use the services as appropriate to its circumstances and improvement needs. Where, however, a school has low attainment and poor pupil progress – and/or lacks the capacity to promote improvement in general or in a specific area – the consortium will arrange the necessary improvement support on behalf of the school in consultation with the headteacher and governing body and, where charged-for services are deployed, charge the school accordingly. The objective is to build up the capacity of all schools to take responsibility for organising their own improvement.

Consortium's brokerage and improvement activities will include:

- facilitating the use and interpretation of data as part of this process to support forensic school self-evaluation and identify gaps in attainment;
- sharing anonymised benchmarking data on the performance and progress of comparable groups of pupils in different subjects and phases to encourage and enable schools to learn from each other;
- supporting school leaders to broker appropriate support from other schools, consortia-commissioned programmes and other sources, where a school has the capacity lead its own improvement;
- overseeing the implementation of a support programme, including advising on the deployment of headteachers capable of acting as executive heads, in those schools that are in special measures, require significant

improvement, or are otherwise identified through the categorisation process as causing serious concern;

- commissioning and quality assuring a range of predominantly classroom-based training and development programmes to support improvements in teaching and learning and subject knowledge;
- working with headteachers and other leaders through joint lesson observations to develop a consistent understanding on what constitutes excellent teaching and learning;
- identifying excellent departments and lead practitioners using nationally agreed criteria who can be deployed to support other schools for part of their working week;
- providing mentoring support for headteachers and school leadership teams, including Chairs of Governors, that need support in leading improvement¹;
- encouraging, incentivising and steering schools to work on school improvement together through local clusters of schools;
- providing access to evidence of ‘what works’ in terms of closing gaps in attainment and support schools to implement and assess the impact of targeted intervention strategies;
- supporting the formation and development of federations where this is an agreed way to effect school improvement;
- support the formation and establishment of interim executive boards where this is agreed as a way to effect school improvement and improve governance within a setting;
- facilitating the development and work of Professional Learning Communities, lesson study and other means for teachers to work together within and across schools to review and improve their pedagogical practice;
- working with university education departments to provide access to knowledge about teaching and learning and to support research projects based in schools; and
- co-ordinating support and training for teaching assistants and newly qualified teachers.

¹ This support should come from a serving headteacher (and the wider leadership team) of a strongly performing school – for example, a lead practitioner school

In relation to supporting the development of school leadership regional consortia will, in partnership with leading headteachers:

- commission from schools, universities and other specialist providers development and training programmes for middle leaders to better equip them to analyse and use data, assess the quality of classroom learning and coach other;
- support succession planning by working with local authorities and diocesan authorities to aggregate data on projected turnover and retirements of senior school leaders;
- commission from schools, universities and other specialist providers development and training programmes for emerging senior leaders – reflecting the requirements and work of the National Leadership Development Board as it develops;
- commission programmes that will empower and enable effective heads to support other schools , act as an executive headteacher, lead a federation or work for part of the week as a challenge adviser;
- encourage and co-ordinate opportunities for emerging leaders to have access to leadership secondments in other schools; and
- ensure that every new headteacher in their first year of headship has access to an effective headteacher mentor.

Through the challenge process regional consortia will assess the general and specific needs of schools in each local authority area with regard to the specific literacy and numeracy training and development they require. In consultation with headteachers consortia will commission and facilitate the delivery of a strategy that will deliver the range of support required at classroom level.

Early Years Foundation Phase support involves providing challenge to leaders of Foundation Phase settings and liaising with headteachers and other providers to audit training needs and commission and quality assure an appropriate range of programmes.

The consortia will co-ordinate and quality assure the delivery of the aims of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy by ensuring the alignment of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) and the related activity supported through the Education Improvement Grant across each of the local authorities within the regional consortia, so that there is consistency in the development of excellence in pedagogy, and the meeting of agreed targets, not only across both the Welsh-medium and bilingual sectors, but also in the delivery of Welsh as a second language.

Co-ordination of the regional dimension of the ICT Strategy will include school ICT self-evaluation, leadership and planning of ICT for learning; safeguarding,

emerging technologies, virtual learning environments, learning technology and the national literacy and numeracy framework, running networks for heads of departments and ICT co-ordinators, support for pedagogy and curriculum development (with reference to the Learning and Digital World Strategy).

Strategic overview of the regional 14-19 offer, including allocation of resources to programmes in line with Welsh Government priorities, will include:

- support for planning the use of related grant support;
- ensuring school and provider provision is in line to deliver the expected impact inherent in these grants; and
- administering the relevant grants and co-ordinating and supporting bids for emerging grant opportunities.

Regional consortia will commission or provide and quality assure delivery of governor support services and training for governors including the mandatory training programmes required for new governors, training for chairs of governors and, in respect of understanding and applying data effectively for all governors. Consortia will also encourage and facilitate governor networks, enable governors to observe each other's meetings and deploy able chairs of governors to mentor other governing bodies that are struggling to undertake their role effectively. Consortia will jointly develop, in consultation with local authorities, diocesan authorities, governors and headteachers a performance data template for headteachers to use to report to governors on a termly or half termly basis a school's in-year performance on:

- pupil performance and standards;
- pupil attendance;
- pupil exclusions;
- staff sickness absence and other absences (including covered lesson arrangements and the costs of supply);
- quality of teaching (as assessed through classroom observations); and
- progress and attainment data relative to targets.

Consortia will also identify a pool of able candidates that are willing to serve on governing bodies where there is weak governance.

In exercising these roles account will need to be taken of funding for governor support being delegated to schools in some authorities.

Regional consortia will deliver specialist human resource advice for schools in line with Appendix 1, *The National Model for Regional Working – Revitalising*

People Management in Schools which can be found at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/national-model-for-regional-working/?lang=en>. Regional consortia and local authorities will not duplicate the work of each other.

Regional consortia will discuss with and provide advice to the local authority on its statutory school interventions, and can also be called upon to provide some of those interventions on behalf of the local authority. However, the statutory powers to implement intervention remain with the local authority.

The Education Improvement Grant for Schools (EIG) was introduced in April 2015, replacing a number of existing grant funding streams in a single new outcome-focused grant arrangement. The EIG is intended to support Local Authorities and consortia to improve outcomes and tackle barriers to learners achieving their potential through delivery of support and professional development. The EIG brings together a range of previously separate grant funding streams to minimise bureaucracy and allow flexibility at a regional and local level to use funding to support regional and local priorities.

To ensure a closer alignment of funding to our national regional and local priorities, strategies, implementation and delivery, Local Authorities and consortia must use the EIG to support delivery of the strategic objectives and priorities as set out in *Qualified for Life*. The EIG should also support an improvement in pupil attainment from Reception to KS4.

Role of consortia

It is for consortia and local authorities to evaluate local needs, strengths and weaknesses and plan how best to utilise the EIG to support delivery of their regional plan. Within the structure of an agreed outcomes framework, consortia and Local Authorities must set out their actions and the measures they will use to monitor progress toward delivery of these outcomes. Measures should reflect local priorities, be proportionate and align with the strategic objectives and priorities, overarching aims and outcomes agreed. These measures will be used to evidence the impact and value for money of the EIG and the annual round of business planning will be used to monitor actions and progress.

The responsibilities of local authorities

Local authorities will retain statutory accountability for school performance together with the responsibility for the exercise of statutory powers of intervention and organisation of schools.

Local authorities and diocesan authorities will designate a lead officer to act as the main point of contact with the regional consortium, in accordance with their arrangements described below.

Local authorities, diocesan authorities and regional consortia will have open discussions together about their plans which should be clear about the

respective roles, functions and intended actions of each. These processes will remove any risk of regional consortia, diocesan authorities or authorities duplicating effort. In particular local authorities should share with regional consortia information on their proposals and decisions in relation to:

- the overall vision and social and economic development priorities for their area, having particular regard to issues that are likely to affect schools;
- school organisation, including plans for federations, amalgamations, closures and delivery of their 21st century school strategies;
- supporting the delivery of those having special educational and additional learning needs;
- the organisation of behaviour support and education welfare services;
- their youth engagement strategy;
- safeguarding arrangements for children and young people; and
- arrangements to promote effective procurement and the development of business support services within schools.

Local authorities will provide regional consortia with access to relevant data systems, including anonymised data sets on pupil performance where this is held at local authority level, and other information to facilitate their work.

Local authorities will not duplicate the work or activity of regional consortia.

The development of secure local authority and consortia relationships will mean that both parties will consider urgently and jointly recommendations on statutory school interventions from any source.

4. Governance and accountability

Joint committees

Joint Committee is the term used herein to reference either the Joint Committee or the Company Board unless stated.

The work of the regional consortium will be overseen by a joint committee² of the constituent local authorities or a Company Board, depending upon the form which best suits the region's requirements in order to carry out the functions specified and to deliver the outcomes set out within this report. Local authorities should note that the Joint Committee may make decisions which affect the delivery of services and/or the resources available for improving school performance. It is crucial, therefore that local authorities ensure that the governance arrangements that they put in place for their consortium sit correctly alongside the authority's methods for decision making and ensuring democratic accountability. The joint committee will have responsibility for approving the consortium budget, business plan and making judgments on the performance of the regional consortia.

Local authorities should make sure that the members of the Joint Committee have:

- the right skills, experience and seniority to make decisions (& that new office holders (for example following elections) are appropriately trained and introduced to the requirements of the role);
- have a clear understanding of their collaborative regional responsibility; and
- are clear about their roles and responsibilities and how these dovetail with the democratic accountabilities.

The membership of a joint committee will comprise of the leader of each constituent local authority or education portfolio holder – they will be the decision making body and the elected members will have full voting rights. Advice to the joint committee will be provided by the lead chief executive and/or the advisory board.

The membership of the company board, where this structure is adopted, should reflect appropriate arrangements which are compliant with Local Authority's processes. Regional consortia with company boards should make

² Sections 101 and 102 of the LGA 1972 (and in the case of Executive Functions sections 19 and 20 of the LGA 2000 and relevant Regulations made under these sections) enable the work of authorities to be discharged through a variety of internal arrangements, and, in this context, external arrangements involving, and working with, other authorities. In particular these powers include the ability of two or more authorities to discharge any of their functions jointly, and where this occurs, to do so via a joint committee, and/ or by their officers.

sure that the arrangements do not undermine local authority decision making and democratic accountability.

The joint committee will normally meet not less than once a school term to oversee the work of the consortium. Each year, one meeting will focus on considering and agreeing the draft business plan and the accompanying budget. The business plan will also include a report from the regional consortium's managing director on the outcomes. Meetings will focus on monitoring progress against the plan. The chair of the committee shall, after consultation with the managing director and the lead chief executive, agree the agenda and papers to be prepared for each joint committee meeting.

The Joint Committee should establish arrangements for appointments of senior staff and to deal with HR issues such as grievances.

Normally notice of meetings of the joint committee will be given on the consortium's website and the meetings will be open to the public although arrangements for items to be heard in private, (such as those arrangements employed by local authorities) may be followed.

The advisory board

Joint committees will be supported by an advisory board, (although in different consortia, this function may be called by a different name) whose role will be to support and challenge the work of the regional consortium and provide progress updates and advice to the joint committee.

It is the responsibility of the Joint Committee and the constituent local authorities to determine the structures below the level of the Joint Committee. Descriptions of the role of the advisory board are a suggestion arising from the role as discussed during the co-construction of the national model.

Welsh Government suggests that the membership of the advisory board, appointed by the joint committee may comprise:

- one representative of the joint committee who will also act as the champion of the consortium in the region;
- a nominee of Welsh Government (observer status);
- the lead director of education;
- managing director;
- no more than [five] individuals who will be appointed, with the approval of the joint committee, for their expertise in education, leadership and corporate governance. Those nominated shall include at least one serving headteacher drawn from a school within the consortium area;

- consideration should also be given to the engagement of other key stakeholders such as diocesan authorities, etc when constituting the advisory board and other consultative and stakeholder forums that consortia may choose to engage.

Reporting regularly to the Joint Committee, the advisory board may oversee areas such as:

- strategy – advisory board members will constructively challenge and contribute to the development of strategy to enable the organisation achieving its goals;
- business planning – advisory board members will consider and make recommendations in respect of the business plan to the joint committee;
- input into the quality assurance approach adopted by the consortia and consider the value for money offered by specific approaches; and
- monitor the performance of the consortia and its progress towards meeting its goals and objectives, reporting to the joint committee and providing their perspective on progress.

Normally, the managing director and chair of the advisory board shall attend meetings of the joint committee.

It should be made clear that the advisory board acts in advisory capacity on behalf of the joint committee. The joint committee is the decision making body.

An illustration of the governance model can be found in the Annex.

Reviewing governance and accountability

Joint Committees, advisory boards and consortium should regularly review their own internal governance and accountability structures in line with the WAO report dated June 2015 and recommendation 5. In particular they should look to:

- improve their use of self-evaluation of their performance and governance;
- improve performance management and business planning;
- improve risk management
- further develop their financial management arrangements;
- consider ways to develop joint scrutiny arrangements of the overall consortia as well as scrutiny individual local authorities;
- ensure openness and transparency of decision making; and
- develop robust communication strategies.

The overall regional consortium business plan

Each regional consortium will produce a plan covering a 3 year outline timeframe, which contains a detailed 12 month business plan, and headlines for the following 2 years in the form of key priorities and milestones, using a standard template that will set out:

- a summary of the consortium's strategic objectives, priority outcomes and targets;
- a report summarising the performance of the schools in the consortium over the previous 12 months and an analysis of the main areas of strength and weakness within the consortium;
- the priorities for improvement – both in terms of particular schools and cross-cutting issues;
- the work programmes to be undertaken over the following 12 months;
- the measurable improvement in school performance to be achieved over the 12 months;
- an outline of the following 2 years key priorities and milestones; and
- a high level strategic risk register.

The draft business plan will be submitted to the Joint Committee for approval. The managing director will report to the Joint Committee the outcome of discussions on the draft plan with individual local authorities and schools, which will take place as set out below. The business plan and risk register as agreed by the joint committee will be submitted to the Welsh Government for information and comment by March of each year.

A business plan for each local authority

Alongside the overarching business plan regional consortia will produce an annex for each respective local authority.

Each local authority will provide for their consortium a statement of any changes they propose to make over the coming 12 months in school organisation and their planned arrangements for delivering key services.

The annex and the statement will be discussed individually with each authority through a meeting with the lead officer, and the elected member with responsibility for children and education services.

The Local Authority Leader will make sure that the governance arrangements for consortia enable them to maintain oversight of, and accountability for their statutory duties.

The business plan annex will need to dovetail with and not duplicate other local authority corporate plans and the Single Plan.

Any local authority concerns or requests in relation to the content of the draft business plan that cannot be agreed between the managing director and a constituent authority will be reported to the Joint Committee as part of their consideration of the draft plan.

The business plan annex for each local authority may, once it is agreed, form a Service Level Agreement, between the consortium and the local authority.

Scrutiny and liaison between local authorities and regional consortia

Regional consortia will nominate a senior officer to liaise with the each authority's lead officer. It shall be for the respective officers to agree on the scope and frequency of their meetings.

Each local authority and their respective regional consortium will make arrangements for robust democratic scrutiny of the consortium business plan and activities as it relates to individual local authority area. Each authority's scrutiny committee for education services will also need sufficient information to consider the performance of their schools.

The consortia and its Joint Committee will also need to ensure effective scrutiny of the complete business plan and its delivery, alongside the scrutiny by individual authorities. This could either be undertaken through co-ordinated work by local authority scrutiny committees or through alternative arrangements to be decided and agreed by the Joint Committee.

Local authorities undertake to be reasonable in their expectation of consortia staff and resources and ensure that senior leaders are not required to spend a disproportionate amount of their time on reporting and scrutiny work.

Accountability and relations with Welsh Government

Welsh Government will need to sign off annually the funding available via Welsh Government grants for each of the consortia and will also provide comment on the annual business plan in relation to national policies.

The managing director of each consortium will meet jointly with lead officials of the Welsh Government on a half-termly basis in the spirit of co-construction, to:

- discuss progress against consortia business plans;
- exchange information on consortia working;

- identify factors that are enabling or holding back progress on school improvement; and
- liaise on the implementation of government programmes.

Review and challenge events

Review and challenge will be most effective when the regional consortium has an honest and transparent self-evaluation in place and a working relationship with their Welsh Government link officer which is equally honest and transparent.

During the early part of 2016, the Welsh Government, local authorities and consortia will review the current format of the review and challenge events and refocus this approach to a more collaborative but robust and comprehensive “system review” approach.

Once this approach has been developed detail on the revised arrangements will be published.

Relations with schools

Each consortium will ensure it consults effectively with both school leaders and school governors. It should ensure clear lines of communication between groups of headteachers and governors, including a region-wide panel to discuss plans and proposals for developing school improvement and to receive feedback on the quality of service received in respect of both the consortium’s challenge and support functions. The panel shall include representatives of primary, secondary and special schools.

User panels will meet at least termly and the meeting in the autumn term will consider the draft business plan for the coming year. Significant concerns from school leaders and governors regarding the content of the draft business plan will be reported to the joint committee as part of their consideration of the draft plan.

Consortia should also make arrangements for collecting systematic feedback from participants on their programmes and this information should be collated and presented to the user panels.

Estyn inspection

Estyn carried out a remit study on the progress being made by consortia in November 2014; the report ‘improving schools through regional consortia was published in June 2015 along with the WAO report – ‘achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia – an early view’.

The inspection of consortia will take place in spring-summer 2016, with Estyn planning to undertake follow up visits to the consortia a year after that point.

Estyn will focus primarily on the impact of consortia upon the standards that learners achieve, the quality of service provided to schools and on the quality of leadership and management of consortia.

5. The organisation and operation of regional consortia

The central organisation of the regional consortium

Consortia may decide, because of the geographical size of the region or the need to reflect cultural and language differences, to organise delivery of their services through hubs. That will be a matter for Joint Committees to determine. However, all consortia should ensure that they retain sufficient expertise at the centre in order to manage the required on a cross-consortium basis.

The role of the managing director

The Managing Director role is by now well-established and substantive post holders are in place to lead the consortia. The role is encapsulated in the published HR paper. While the original vision for the role has been reaffirmed any further development of the role is now considered a matter for the Joint Committees and local authorities rather than for a national strategy document.

Funding and finance

Regional consortia will obtain their funding from three sources:

Core Local Authority Funding

In 2013, local authorities gave a commitment³ to provide funding for school improvement and transfer it directly to the consortia.

From 1st April 2014 the transferred funding has been lodged with the lead financial authority on behalf of the consortium and made available in full to the consortium. Further financial resources would be added if further functions were transferred into the consortium.

Annually, the lead financial officers from each consortium will identify the regional consortia's funding. The level of funding that is proposed to be transferred from each local authority to consortia be submitted to the Joint Committee for agreement.

Dedicated funding for schools and school improvement routed through consortia by the Welsh Government

The major Welsh Government grants (such as EIG) and associated Local Authority match-funding will be passported via the lead authority to the consortium, apart from those elements that are delegated directly to schools.

³ This commitment refers to the national agreement reached between the WLGA, the 22 leaders of local authorities and the Minister for Education and Skills.

Centrally retained elements of the major grants issued on a regional basis will be passported in full and retained by the consortium.

All funding intended to be delegated to schools must be delegated to schools. Where schools require additional guidance and support in spending the funding efficiently, consortia will provide that guidance and support.

Funding generated by consortia as a result of charging for some of the programmes and interventions that they commission

The consortia will be expected to demonstrate openness and clarity in the use of all elements of funding, using the business plans as a vehicle for agreeing the full budget breakdown and the Managing Director's annual report to clearly and transparently report on how funding was spent.

Timescales

The National Model for Regional Working has been progressively implemented since April 2014. Not all services contained in this model have been delivered by consortia from that date.

Therefore, as part of the business planning process and to provide an element of flexibility, consortia will need to clearly show what will be delivered directly by consortia, along with a clear rationale as to why services outlined in the model are not considered to be appropriate to be delivered regionally.

Annex: Regional consortia governance model

