



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression: update for September 2021

Update from the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language.

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## Context

1. The Welsh Government published the **Renew and Reform plan** in June 2021, setting out our priorities and plan to support learners' wellbeing and progression in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our plan set out the framework and the funding available to enable us to work together with our partners and stakeholders to support learners and practitioners in response to the pandemic.
2. Our primary focus is on providing funding direct to schools and colleges to support and promote wellbeing and progression for all learners. In addition to that, as the evidence suggests that the impacts of the pandemic have been different for different groups of learners, the plan also set out our plans to develop and deliver bespoke packages of support for those most affected by the pandemic, including:
  - learners in early years
  - vulnerable and disadvantaged learners
  - learners in post-16 and transition
3. This publication provides an update for members of the Senedd and wider stakeholders across the education sector on the progress of the Renew and Reform plan, the current funding allocated to support delivery of

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interventions aimed at supporting learning, and our priorities for the coming year.

## Support delivered since the publication of Renew and Reform

4. We have already begun to deliver crucial support as part of the Renew and Reform plan. As part of the 'Summer of Fun' £4.55 million was allocated to local authorities. Local authorities have worked with local partners to deliver a range of funded play, sporting and cultural activities in English and Welsh. This has helped support the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of learners aged 0 to 25, aligned with other important initiatives like the School Holiday Enrichment Programme and the Playworks Programme.
5. A further £450,000 has been allocated to develop pilots for sporting and cultural activities to run alongside the school day, in partnership with Sport Wales and Arts Council of Wales, as part of the total £5 million allocated to the 'Summer of Fun'.
6. We have also worked with partners to support the delivery of a significantly expanded School Holiday Enrichment Programme – 8000 places were made available to learners, 50% more than in 2019 when the scheme was last run before the pandemic.
7. The Welsh Government has recently announced £2.4 million to support Welsh language immersion and Cymraeg 2050 education priorities. This includes £2.2 million to ensure that we safeguard and expand capacity for late immersion, so older learners get the support they need to confidently move into learning through Welsh. The funding will support learners at Welsh-medium schools who, during the pandemic, lost the opportunity to use their Welsh every day, and had limited or no contact with the language because of the disruption caused. We will provide one-off funding of £200,000 to the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, which will help rebuild staffing levels following the pandemic.
8. £1.7 million has been announced to support newly qualified teachers to move into teaching, supporting our efforts to Renew and Reform, in addition to the previous £6 million. An additional £3.594 million has been allocated to

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support learning recovery, the delivery of qualifications in 2021 and preparations for 2022 in order to respond to COVID-19 disruption.

9. The Renew and Reform plan confirmed in June that over £150 million in funding had been provided for the 2021 to 2022 financial year, in addition to over £220 million in 2020 to 2021. The additional support announced by the Welsh Government over the summer brings the total funding for Renew and Reform to over £160 million in the 2021 to 2022 financial year.

## Our priorities for this academic year

10. With the return of schools and settings this term, we will continue to work to develop and deliver crucial support over the next academic year across the 4 key areas identified in the Renew and Reform plan.

## Learning and wellbeing for all learners

11. We are working to ensure that the continued funding of the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards programme (RRRS) builds on the vital support learners have already received. RRRS has enabled schools to identify those learners in greatest need, and develop support for them in line with the programme's principles. Importantly, this includes support for learners in Welsh-medium schools who live in non-Welsh speaking households, who will have faced particular challenges during the periods of remote and blended learning.
12. This additional capacity, capability, and targeted support for learners will now continue to be a core part of our long-term approach to supporting learning, coupled with other initiatives to support learners and practitioners. We have distributed £35.8 million in funding for this financial year to schools and local authorities as part of RRRS in order to retain and support the 1,800 full-time equivalent staff recruited.
13. We are also investing over £7 million this year to offer term-long placements to eligible newly qualified teachers (NQTs). We have matched over 400 NQTs with schools, helping them to build their teaching experience and support schools' capacity to address the impacts of the pandemic.

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14. We have commissioned an independent evaluation of this year's 'Summer of Fun' initiative, to report in November 2021. Following this, we will look to build on the successes of the 'Summer of Fun', including looking to further support access to play, sporting, creative and expressive, and cultural activities and experiences for learners. Aligned with this, we will continue to develop initiatives to ensure provision of additional quality experiences and activities in and around the school day, week and year.
15. Further priorities for this academic year include measures to support learning and teaching in the event of further disruption, building on the expertise developed in schools over 2021 to 2022. This will include ensuring the relevant guidance is up to date and clear on expectations for schools and other learning providers.

## **Disadvantaged learners and vulnerable learners**

16. Over the summer we established a project aimed at addressing the effects of the disruption of the pandemic on learner outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, including those newly vulnerable or disadvantaged, ensuring we reduce the likelihood of long-term impacts.
17. We will continue to support vulnerable learners, including through the rollout of a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing.
18. The £9 million for the Whole School Approach this financial year will support:
  - improvements and expansion of the existing school counselling service, which sees around 11,500 learners annually
  - training teachers and others on children's wellbeing
  - delivering universal and targeted interventions in schools
  - rolling out nationally the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) school in-reach pilots which sees dedicated mental health professionals working with schools
19. We are also working as part of the Whole School Approach to support staff wellbeing, including working with the charity Education Support.
20. In addition to our existing commitments, we will work to identify vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and seek to provide early, targeted support. We

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will continue to scope and identify the potential for further support to reduce the likelihood of long-term impacts on vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

## Learners in early years

21. The identification of the early years as a priority cohort within Renew and Reform underlines our commitment to address the risk of our youngest learners missing key development milestones.
22. We have committed an additional £13 million this financial year to ensure young learners have quality, play-based learning opportunities before entering formal education and throughout their early years. Funding will be direct via the Education Improvement Grant and will:
  - strengthen adult-to-child ratios in schools and maintained nurseries
  - provide additional resources for the non-maintained (childcare) sector
  - provide additional training opportunities across the childcare and education sectors, with a focus on the needs of early years learners
23. This additional investment will support positive relationships and provide practitioners with the time and space to support learners in their language development, social skills and physical development. As part of RRRS in this financial year, £1.92 million has also been committed to support the non-maintained childcare sector. We will monitor the distribution and use of this funding, with spending plans to be submitted in the autumn term.
24. To strengthen and reinforce Foundation Phase approaches in early years learning we have been raising awareness of the benefits of play and play-based learning. We are developing training modules for practitioners to support their development in a number of areas, including child development, transitions, and outdoor learning – these will be made available to practitioners in the autumn term.
25. We have commissioned Swansea University to undertake a Delphi study to help reach a consensus among experts on the best methods and approaches early years practitioners can use in early education and childcare settings to identify, address or mitigate the impacts of COVID-19

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on the under-5's. The insights from this study are expected to inform programme delivery.

## Learners in post-16 and transition

26. We are providing £33 million this year to support full-time 16 to 19-year-old learners undertaking A level or vocational courses at further education colleges and school sixth forms. The disruption to qualifications in the last 2 academic years means learners preparing for qualifications in this academic year may need support to help their confidence and preparation. An important priority over the next academic year will be working across the education sector to support learners preparing for these qualifications and to enable their transition to their next steps, as we did in 2021.
27. We are also continuing to develop policy to support post-16 learners in the medium and long term. Working with the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre, we have begun a rapid review of published research on the most effective methods for supporting post-16 learners with their wellbeing and their learning in the aftermath of significant disruptions to their education. The interim findings of this exercise will inform the development of a set of proposed initiatives to support learners, practitioners and providers.
28. We are scoping a range of support initiatives, which could include distinct tools to help providers in their efforts to expand and upskill the workforce, as well as provide coordinated tutoring and wellbeing support services for learners. We will continue to analyse research findings and map these to shape existing and new support initiatives. We will work with a wide range of stakeholders and with learners to help design, trial, refine and evaluate these support initiatives.
29. We will publish the post-16 recovery implementation plan this term setting out our detailed plans, including work streams, timeline for implementation, evaluation strategy, and research and scoping work to date.

## Research and evaluation

30. We are developing our approach to informing and evaluating the success of the Renew and Reform programme. Findings will be reported transparently and regularly through articles and reports on our Statistics and Research pages and disseminated through our usual communication channels with partners and stakeholders.
31. We will evaluate initiatives against the success criteria set out in the Renew and Reform plan (wellbeing for learners and practitioners, educational progression and attainment, equity, and stakeholder confidence) using a range of different measures, viewpoints and evidence sources to inform this. An independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the RRRS programme is ongoing.
32. We will continue to collate and analyse emerging evidence on the most effective support for learners and practitioners and use it to inform our plans.
33. Our coordinated approach to evaluation will minimise the burden on practitioners and learning providers and will seek to avoid asking for large amounts of additional data and reporting.

## About this document

This document is a copy of the web page [Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression: update for September 2021](https://gov.wales/renew-and-reform-supporting-learners-wellbeing-and-progression-update-september-2021.html) downloaded.

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