



The structure of education services in Wales

Independent Task and Finish Group Report

March 2011

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9 March 2011

Further information

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Chair's preface

Minister,

When you invited us to form a Task and Finish Group to consider the future structure of education in Wales we were honoured at being entrusted with such a vital task and determined to deliver a report which would neither sit on a shelf nor achieve consensus by being bland. We agreed with you that there's too much of that kind of review in Wales. You gave us the opportunity to undertake this task because you have seen enough as the responsible Minister to know that Wales needs an honest look at its educational performance and a review which gets to grip both with the realities of what we are actually offering many of our children, young people and adults and what we need to do to provide them with the world class education of which we hear so much but in all honesty see so little. We can and must do much better than we are doing as a nation educationally and this review of educational structures and current approaches to delivery has been carried out in that spirit.

In saying this, we recognise and embrace the key concept often missed in movements of educational reform that it is the quality and commitment of all the people who work within those structures that is of paramount importance. Structural reform must be about empowering people – teachers, young people and adults – to succeed more. Our recommendations are rooted in this perspective and intended to identify and develop structures which will assist front line educationalists to radically improve school and college performance. In the process, greater professional accountability to parents, governors and the community will also in our view be realised. I must stress that our very experienced group of educationalists is united in believing that accountability for educational performance has become confused and over-complex in Wales, and thus weak, and that greater transparency and responsibility around educational outcomes is a vital reform objective within Wales.

In the education system we have reviewed, we all have different responsibilities but our common purpose is to provide educational opportunities that are of the highest quality possible for the learners in our care. No-one enters the teaching profession to fail children. However, educational opportunity is the greatest gift we can offer our learners and if we fail to provide it to even one person then it is a tragedy that is likely to blight their whole lives. That is the challenge facing educators and politicians. Learners and their




families have a right to expect that we are not prepared to accept anything that is of second best quality. Unfortunately the reality of educational outcomes in Wales is that too much of what we provide does not compare with the best attained within the UK let alone internationally.

During these past few months we have seen and learnt of schools and colleges which offer quite excellent educational opportunities to learners. We have seen the dedication of teachers, lecturers and their leaders first hand and recognised the good work of officers and officials both locally and nationally. If all schools delivered outcomes that were as good as our very best we could truly claim that our education system was with the best in the world. Inconsistency in our outcomes means that we cannot make this claim currently. Excellence is still limited to too few learners and our standards are not good enough for all.

In the past such a proposition would have been met with defensiveness or self-denial. We have been heartened in the process of undertaking this quite exhaustive review by the response of educators and politicians. We have not discovered a culture of making excuses. There is widespread recognition of a need to raise educational performance in today's highly competitive global economy where once 'third world' or 'developing' countries are now surpassing the outcomes previously thought acceptable in the more developed world. Wales needs to raise its game and this review embraces that.

We must all share responsibility for the quality of the education that we provide to and for our learners. Politicians, educators, parents and learners need to work in partnership during the coming years. Responsibility and accountability go hand in hand with partnership.

Every member of the Task and Finish group has been a teacher, four of us have been leaders at school, further education (FE) and local authority (LA) level and the fifth has been a leader in the private sector. We all know full well from personal experience that teachers have to face major challenges on a daily basis. We do not thank them enough for their dedication and passion not just for their work but for the futures of the learners that we entrust to them. This review is rooted in respect for that dedication but also in the new thinking and structural changes required to help them succeed more in their core function.



Our task has been to look at some of the changes we think are necessary to ensure that no learner leaves school or college without core skills of literacy and numeracy and with strong communication, interpersonal and leadership skills also. Moreover that all learners have the opportunities they deserve irrespective of family background, faith, language or location. In a world in which countries that have been impoverished are now achieving world class educational performances, seen recently in PISA results, Wales surely cannot accept, as some still seek to do, that children from more deprived backgrounds are somehow doomed to fail. That has never been the 'Welsh way'. Indeed it is the opposite of that as we have always as a people seen education as transformative and the key to social mobility.

All of us in your group see education in this light. But we also know from experience that our resources and structures as a nation need to be aligned fully so as to really support schools and colleges if we are to achieve the transformative performance levels we need to achieve for our young people and indeed our nation. That alignment will mean structural reform around where responsibility and accountability for performance – and support mechanism for teachers – should best be located within our system. Alignment also means greater integration between all levels of education. That includes the relationship between primary and secondary schools and indeed the school and college systems. Our recommendations are aimed at clarifying these key issues within our system.

Following the Assembly Election whoever forms a government will have the political mandate to determine the direction of travel for education in Wales. We would invite the Minister with responsibility for education, whilst working in partnership with local government and leaders of education, to spell out that direction clearly, determine priorities and present them in an unambiguous way. Teachers have had to face uncertainty in the number of initiatives that they have had to consider for too long. We now need clarity on basic, structural and strategic issues within our system of education in order that heads, principals and teachers can focus more on improving the quality of the teaching and learning that takes place in schools and colleges, and not be distracted by other matters. Teachers need time to teach. We believe this review provides much of this clarity.

At the heart of what we recommend is greater clarity over the roles and responsibilities within our education system. A new partnership is required between the Welsh Assembly Government, inspectorates, local government, schools and colleges, the new regional consortia and indeed parents.



We recognise that politicians at local government level have significant challenges to face and the effective and efficient use of resources is a matter that concerns them continuously. We recognise the difficulties they face in dealing with issues such as spare capacity, amalgamation and potential closure of schools and realise that these and other challenges will not miraculously go away. They all impact on the quality of the education that we provide. We acknowledge their selfless commitment in placing the future of our learners at the very centre of their actions. A renewed partnership of politicians and educators working together for the good of learners will be vital during the coming years. Following the National Referendum on 3 March, we can now make our own laws for the benefit of education directly in Wales.

We stress that parents have a vital role to play in enabling the 'system' to deliver excellence. We have seen how good schools and colleges are transparently accountable to and engage actively with parents for the good of learners, sometimes in the most challenging circumstances. Governors at schools and further education institutions (FEIs) also play a significant role in calling to account both performance and outcomes on behalf of learners. We thank them for their work and recognise that we will be asking them to play an enhanced role in the future.

We could not have undertaken our work without the support of the many colleagues who provided us with evidence in writing or personally and we want to express our thanks to them. We will be publishing written responses and recording also the evidence of good practice that has been forwarded to us.

We need to express our gratitude to colleagues from DCELLS who have helped us significantly during the past five months. Carla Lyne for coordinating our work, Peter Higgins for his exceptional skills in drafting reports, Caroline Gibbons for securing data and collating responses and John Brice for arranging meetings and interviews.

At a personal level I want to thank my colleagues Bethan Guilfoyle, Wil Edmunds, Brett Pugh and Tim Williams. Their commitment to the work has been absolute and their knowledge and experience invaluable. Our discussions have been robust and challenging and we have always tried our best to place the learner at the very centre of all our deliberations.



Task and Finish Group Members

Vivian Thomas (Chair)

Following a career as a teacher and County Education Adviser, Vivian Thomas became headteacher at a Welsh-medium Comprehensive School and subsequently at an English-medium Comprehensive School. In 1996 he was appointed Director of Education for the County Borough of Neath Port Talbot. In 2006–7 he was appointed as a Specialist Adviser to the Independent Strategic Review of education in Northern Ireland.

Wil Edmunds OBE

Wil Edmunds has had a long and distinguished career in secondary schools, community colleges and further education. He has been a Principal and Chief Executive of two Welsh Colleges and Chair of ACCAC (Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru/Qualifications and Assessment Authority for Wales) from 2004–2006 followed by being a member of the Welsh Assembly Government Ministerial Advisory Group for the Department for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) until 2008.

He was the Welsh Assembly Government representative on the Learning and Skills Development Agency in England from 1999–2005 and has held many committee and advisory roles in Wales and the UK.

Bethan Guilfoyle CBE

Bethan Guilfoyle has been headteacher of Treorchy Comprehensive School since 1996. She is currently on part time secondment to Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority education department. She is also a member of the Ministerial Advisory Group for DCELLS, a council member of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee for the Department for Health and Social Services, Welsh Assembly Government. She has also been Chair of the DCELLS Corporate Governance Committee, a Governor at the University of Glamorgan and Chair of the Student Affairs Committee.



Dr Brett Pugh

Brett Pugh has been Chief Education Officer at Newport City Council since June 2007. Previously he was Director of Education at Blaenau Gwent. His teaching experience ranges from being a lecturer in Further Education, through teaching in the secondary sector to being a primary headteacher. Prior to taking up the Director's post in Blaenau-Gwent he was a primary school adviser in Caerphilly for five years. Brett Pugh is currently Chair of the South East Wales Consortium, consisting of Blaenau Gwent, Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen local authorities. He was made Chair of the Association of Directors of Education Wales (ADEW) in November 2010.


Dr Tim Williams

Tim Williams is the founder of consulting company, Publicani and currently is working on projects in the UK and Australia. A former teacher, he has been called to the Bar from the Inner Temple, London and has worked for the NUT. In 2001 he became a founding associate of the UK Prime Minister's Delivery Unit and has worked as Special Adviser to Cabinet Ministers at Westminster and Cardiff. In 2007 he chaired an Inquiry for the Housing Corporation published as the Williams Report. In 2008 he chaired a Ministerial Task and Finish Group which led to the creation of the Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales. He has extensive experience of working on a range of issues that directly impact on education and writes and speaks internationally on these issues.



Conclusions

1. In our consultation letter we made it perfectly clear that it was the learner in the classroom that would be at the centre of our deliberations, and improving the quality of both teaching and learning the clear objective. We repeat that here without apology. To promote that objective we have analysed the existing education structures and made recommendations for changes which we believe will improve educational outcomes in Wales by ensuring that we have more effective and efficient structures in support of excellence in front line teaching.
2. In our evidence gathering for this report teachers, headteachers, further education lecturers and college principals have told us that, in pursuing their core objective of raising student performance, there needs to be absolute clarity now with regards to what is expected of them, what challenge and support is available from whom and what the priorities are to be for a measurable period of time. This requires clarity at a political and a professional level. Our report is aimed at promoting that professional clarity and in assisting those with political responsibility to identify the key issues in addressing the nation's educational challenges. Clearly, how they use the report is a matter for them.
3. Whoever may be Minister with responsibility for education in the next term of our National Assembly will have a political mandate and responsibility to spell out with absolute clarity the direction of travel for education in Wales for the term of that Assembly. We therefore argue that the Minister should make this direction clear at the very start of an Assembly term. In simple language establish strategic priorities, declare the initiatives that educators at all levels will need to tackle and clarify the goals to be achieved and the standards of performance expected. Moreover there is a need to be absolutely clear as to 'who does what, where and for what purpose' and the responsibility and accountability that goes with that analysis.
4. There needs to be an aligned national effort behind a step change in educational performance in Wales and it starts with clarity at the top, continues through aligned, resourced and appropriate structures and leads to effective approaches which both challenge and support teachers. Parents and governors are key participants in the delivery of quality education within a genuinely accountable education system which produces outstanding teaching and learning opportunities for everyone, irrespective of the demography or the intake of any of our schools and colleges. Educators themselves have told us that we are a long way from this aligned position at this point in time. Hence the commission we were asked to undertake.



5. Consequently, what have we found? The detail may be seen in our full report but it is right to identify and summarise some issues here.


C1. There needs to be a firm acceptance by parents, educators, governors, politicians and learners that we should, and can, do better. Wales needs a culture of high expectations and a better understanding of how our education performance compares with other countries in the UK and indeed with the very best across the world.

C2. There needs to be a renewed sense of clarity around the accountability for performance by educational professionals.

C3. There is a growing understanding that some countries spend less money on education than we do in Wales but are delivering better outcomes than we do in Wales.

C4. All Welsh educationalists need to really embrace the fundamental importance of engaging with parents at all stages of education and of informing them of the development of their children and the comparative performance of their school or college. We believe that parents have the fundamental right to be able to easily access performance information about their child's school and similar schools both locally and nationally. We are clear that insufficient emphasis has been placed on providing parents with the information that they require to fully assess the performance of their children. There has been a lack of transparent data and information that stakeholders can easily understand and use to make robust and reliable judgements.

C5. We believe there has been some confusion as to who is really responsible and accountable for the performance of a school, college or local authority. The key role for education leaders at schools, colleges, local authorities and nationally is well understood and accepted. Similarly, the vital role that politicians play at both local and national level in helping to raise standards and outcomes for learners is considerable. There are processes of inspection and school improvement. The question is how they integrate and align so as to be effective, easily understood and accountable. We conclude that education accountability structures are over complex or simply not clear enough in Wales at this time and that reform is required.



C6. Although we see progress at various key stages, significant variation remains between outcomes in some local authorities when compared to others in terms of raw and value added scores. This variation in certain cases cannot be explained away by differences in demography or intake. With regards to the OECD's¹ internationally accepted PISA² assessment, we are going backwards in terms of performance compared to other countries within the UK, and the UK does not appear to be performing particularly well when compared to outcomes in various other countries of the world.


C7. At Key Stages 1 to 4 pupils in Wales score more poorly in using and applying skills of language, mathematics and science and in writing skills than in any other subject component. The cultivation of these skills is essential. Estyn estimates that a significant percentage of pupils enter secondary education not being able to read at the level their age would indicate. The Minister has already indicated that such outcomes are unacceptable and has initiated a new national literacy strategy to support schools in this task. We welcome this approach and urgency and echo it in our report.

C8. Overall, we conclude that outcomes in respect of literacy are problematic at virtually all stages of education from the Foundation Phase through to further education. Standards of literacy and numeracy are significantly lower than they should be in Wales. There is clear evidence of the relative underachievement of boys, pupils in receipt of free school meals and those looked after by a local authority. Though these issues were freely acknowledged by contributors to this report there is an urgent need to address and solve these problems.

C9. Although we found evidence of exceptional outcomes in certain schools, there was disappointing performance seen in other 'like' schools with similar intakes. Exceptional leadership, inspiring teaching and excellent schools that are offering the best possible opportunities for learners irrespective of background, location or language exist throughout Wales. This is not just our view since Estyn confirms this. However there are too many schools that are coasting and some that are failing. Not enough work is systematically being done to ensure that the achievements and methods of the best are being communicated to, shared with or emulated by other schools. This appears to be a national failing which can and must be addressed.

¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

² Programme for International Student Assessment




C10. We are hopeful that the learning methods which are the essence of the Foundation Phase will help raise standards of literacy and numeracy and their application in everyday life. It is important that children are taught well initially and then those with difficulties are identified early on can be supported subsequently. This can be done if diagnostic testing is introduced for literacy and numeracy towards the end of the Foundation Phase. We stress that diagnostic analysis is required to help assess that a child's development is on course and that appropriate teaching methods are in use. A Foundation Phase without such analysis is not well founded.

C11. There is a clear understanding in Wales that early diagnostic analysis is required so that relative strengths and weaknesses of all children may be identified accurately and this will enable suitably differentiated teaching and learning strategies to take place. The overwhelming view of the profession is that this needs to take place at the earliest possible time in a child's formal education in order that early intervention may occur for the benefit of all pupils.

C12. We welcome the policies that underpin the Foundation Phase and the unprecedented resources that have been provided for schools across Wales. Young children are given an exciting opportunity to learn and develop. However we have found that there is some uncertainty as to what needs to occur to ensure that the individual progress of a child is known and maintained as the child moves from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 and beyond. This suggests that mechanisms for support and challenge to schools in the context of providing knowledge of the key policy objectives and performance expectations alongside best practice are not working as they should throughout Wales.

C13. The evidence provided demonstrates that, while challenge and support may be provided by some local authorities, they are inadequately provided or even absent in some other authorities. It appears that some local authorities simply lack the capacity to challenge and support adequately the performance of their schools. Such a failing is unsustainable.

C14. Evidence of further inconsistency at local level was provided around the key policy of greater financial delegation to schools. In some local authorities this is being managed in partnership with schools and not imposed on them. In others, a quite different approach may be found.



C15. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is taken as a right not a privilege in some local authorities and a programme of in-service education provided after meaningful discussion and debate. Elsewhere, CPD can be imposed or potentially ignored. In some local authorities school clusters are working productively in partnership with Professional Learning Communities and school improvement advisers add value to the processes of teaching and learning. In other authorities, school clusters are slow in developing and find it difficult to secure support.

C16. Some local authorities are taking professional and political decisions to tackle the difficult issues relating to surplus places, size of schools and cooperation with other authorities and the further education (FE) sector. In some places there is a mature recognition of the impact of these issues on pupil performance, curriculum choice and opportunity and effective and efficient use of both revenue and capital budgets. In contrast, some are continually discussing these issues with no realistic outcome in sight.

C17. Failings have not been seen only at local authority level. Much of the failure to establish effective, simple, consistent and accountable education structures and support mechanism with clear missions can be laid at the door of the centre. There is no database of effective teaching and learning resources and programmes kept on a national basis. Such a database or website would greatly assist teachers and schools to look at effective practice. There is also a significant gap in the national accountability framework for education. Aspirational targets should be set for all schools together with interim targets outlining their intended progress. National floor targets for individual schools should also be established. We therefore advocate reform at the centre as well as more locally in this report.

C18. Overall, at the centre in those parts of DCELLS concerned with schools and FE we believe there has been a distinct lack of clarity in terms of mission or outcomes. Silos within DCELLS have operated individually with little understanding of the bigger picture and a distinct lack of joined up thinking. Limited use has been made thus far by the centre of the experience of educationalists with immediate and direct experience of schools, colleges and FE institutions. We are hopeful that, under the management of a new Director General, DCELLS will coordinate itself better, seek the help of experienced educators and become a department that can lead educational development in Wales over the next period of years and add significant value to everything that Welsh educationalists do. It is some way from that clarity, coordination and role at this point.




C19. The development of regional consortia seems to us to be a positive way forward. Local authorities working in partnership in regions to tackle issues relating to resources, capacity and outcomes may well be the way forward at both political and professional levels. We believe that our local authorities cooperating in four regions offer a more effective way forward when compared to 22 authorities trying to resolve issues of delivering educational services, supporting schools and using resources in an effective way. The current regions are in different places in terms of their development making it even more essential that a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities is provided and known in every school and in every local authority. We hope that, as a result of this report, greater political and professional clarity in support of the regional consortium process will be forthcoming and that clarity of mission, resources, support and challenge and structures the teaching profession needs in Wales will be enhanced. Despite the challenges, Wales has a real opportunity to get this right.

C20. One of the promising areas of benefit we have identified in the collaborating culture of the emerging regional consortia is the releasing of resources to the front line that can be secured by the economy of scale and an opportunity to provide very high-quality support services to schools.

C21. Further collaboration and partnership is patently required to ensure that learners in the 14–16 and 16–19 age range are offered real opportunities and choice. Partnership between schools and FE is demonstrably taking place in some parts of Wales. Competition and confusion is seen in other parts of our country. Choice for those wishing to pursue courses through the medium of the Welsh language is also severely restricted in parts of Wales.

C22. Part of the way forward for FE is to collaboratively address further coordination at a Wales level and greater cooperation with regional consortia. However, we also recognise that much of a college's work and business continues with education and skills post-19 and that this must be maintained. Clearly, bespoke or tailor-made programmes for industry and business will feature high in the post-19 sector and will be even more necessary in times of financial stringency.

C23. It is also recognised that some colleges serve extensive geographical areas and some would therefore be required to work in more than one local authority regional consortium area.



C24. The new inspection framework developed by Estyn is seen as a positive improvement on what was perceived formerly as a tick box exercise. Evidence from Estyn indicates that the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure is not being applied consistently across Wales either for the 14–16 age range or for the 16–19 group of young people. There now needs to be careful evaluation of whether the Measure has increased participation, raised standards and been cost effective in delivery. This situation is not assisted by the fact that area network development plans are grant rather than mainstream funded. There appears to have been very little serious work to ensure that these plans are delivering their intended outcomes, raising standards and offering value for money.

C25. We considered governance issues in relation to both schools and colleges. Governors at some schools are provided with relevant data to challenge and support progress. At others, arguably, they are kept in the dark. Governors properly represent parents and the wider community and are there to challenge and support a school on behalf of the pupils. They are volunteers but there is also significant responsibility placed on them. Governors sometimes need help in their task of monitoring the performance of their school.

C26. We note that the FE governance review is about to be published. Governors will need to consider and monitor the effectiveness of FE institutions in the context of the regional consortia of local authorities that are evolving.


C27. It is recognised that FE institutions in Wales must be viewed as a significant and valuable partner by policymakers in economic development. The FE sector has an important role in developing the human capital base of the country. This feature must be sustained.

C28. The standards achieved and qualifications attained by work-based learners' success in attaining full qualifications within frameworks have significantly improved year on year.

C29. In our fact finding visits to FE institutions there was an united view that colleges should maintain their independence and direct funding in any future funding arrangement that might develop.



6. This is the overall tenor of our analysis underpinning our recommendations. We have reported on what we have found and would not now want to be backward looking. We are where we are. We need to recognise our achievements and learn from mistakes. We now need to draw a line and look forward.
7. Consequently, where could we be in two or three years from now?
8. We could of course do nothing. Keep the status quo and hope for the best. We do not believe that this is a realistic option. We would be failing the learners in our care with potentially devastating effects for them, their families and Wales.
9. We could take positive steps to take stock of our strengths, accept that we also have weaknesses and tackle those in a systematic way. The current Minister in a speech on **2 February 2011** argued that we are doing some things very well, and we should celebrate and not lose sight of this. He argued that he agreed with the analysis of Professor David Reynolds that, 'Our problem is not that we do not know how to educate our children in Wales. We do. We have some world class schools, many world class teachers and even a couple of world class local authorities. Our problem is that not everyone is as good as our best, because we do not emulate our best. Solving this problem may need wider cultural change in our country more than in our education system.' We also agree with that analysis, but if we do not take steps to address the issues implicit for education we will not progress at all.
10. The Minister also argued that our system of, and for, education is not one that could currently be classified as good wishing to become great, but that of fair wishing to become good. With great regret we also concur with that analysis. It will take time, excellent leadership at political and professional levels and a clear vision for the way forward and the determination to move in that direction. The text of the Minister's speech may be found at www.wales.gov.uk/newsroom/educationandskills/2011/110202education/?lang=en
11. To begin the process of moving from fair to good we need a central education department that is clear about its mission and a recognition that changes have to take place to ensure that raising standards at all levels is at the very core of all its work. A clear understanding of how education and educators work at all levels and relevant experience is required to ensure that the credibility of officials at the centre is beyond reproach.




12. Our current regions, where we properly see our local authority education departments cooperating for common good, need to move from a position where there are well written and erudite documents on a variety of topics to a position of clear understanding with schools about functions and responsibilities and with the emphasis on improving outcomes being of paramount importance. We recognise that our regions are in differing positions currently, but what does unite them is that they are concentrating on issues that are concerned with school improvement and looking also at ways to make efficiencies and provide resources that can be best used at individual school level. The budgets for the 2011–12 year are now set. We see that particular financial year as a period of time when a range of financial and other issues need to be resolved. By definition, through working as regions there is a clear recognition that none of our 22 local authority education departments can operate as 22 individual and independent silos.

13. Tackling issues of surplus places, 14–19 education and effective and efficient use of resources will mean that local authority education departments individually and through their regions will need to work with partners in FE and other providers to ensure that our learners are best served.

14. We would therefore anticipate that over the next two years we will see substantial changes and that there will be significant and measurable outcomes at a variety of levels. We would argue that the Minister with responsibility for education should review progress annually and report on it, and conduct an in-depth review in the autumn of 2013 to determine whether there is need for further structural change to deliver education in Wales.

15. On the basis of the analysis we have set out there seems to us that following a detailed Ministerial Review there would be three options:

Option 1: A Minister could argue that there was sufficient progress on all fronts for local authority education departments to retain their current functions and responsibilities, collaborating regionally and working with local authority departments, FE and other partners.



Option 2: A Minister could argue that all education services could be delivered through a small number of Regional Education Departments with statutory and legal powers led democratically by politicians from local authorities and educationally by a number of regional directors of education. We take the view that Regional Education Departments would then replace our current local authority education departments. It would not be necessary to create a new tier of local government to do this or to abolish the 22 local authorities. Regional Education Departments would work in partnership with FE, other providers and local authorities, however structured at that time. Issues relating to Revenue Support Grant and a common funding formula for pupils would need to be addressed.

Option 3: A Minister could argue that education and skills could be delivered through a number of Regional Education and Skills Authorities. These would be formal structures with statutory powers that would encompass schools, FE and other providers and would have the responsibility for delivering all educational services across a whole region. Financial and other decisions would be taken at that level. These could act as commissioning authorities for many services. These authorities would be led by an Executive Director for Education and Skills and governed by representatives of local authorities, FE boards and the wider community.

16. In each of the above options there could be opportunities to work closely with the other services currently served by local authorities, the health service, police and other service boards that may evolve by that time, and the voluntary sector. Higher education (HE) also has a significant role to play. Significant cost savings could be achieved that would need to be deployed to the very front line.

17. By definition, it will be those who review progress in moving forward the educational agenda over the next few years that will be in a better position to come to a view as to the best way forward for learners in Wales. Our recommendations are best seen in the context of the steps that we need to take in the short to medium term to ensure that progress is made in all the areas where we perceive there to be challenges that need to be faced.

18. Our recommendations are set out in the following section.



Recommendations


R1. We recommend that the Minister for Education in June 2011 identifies the mission for education for the term of the Assembly and clarifies the responsibilities of educators and politicians. Priorities need to be identified and there needs to be clarity in terms of roles, responsibility and accountability. National goals for learning need to be identified and strategies for meeting these goals made clear.

R2. We recommend that the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) is reorganised so that there is clarity of function and accountability within DCELLS and that stakeholders have confidence in its mission, purpose and capacity to deliver appropriate outcomes. This is to be in place by September 2011.

R3. We recommend that a National Education and Training Standards Unit be established within DCELLS, from its own financial resources. This unit should cover all publicly funded education providers, including schools, local authorities, further education (FE) and other providers. It should be appropriately staffed by people with recent and relevant experience of schools, FE, local authorities and other training providers who can both challenge and support the performance and outcomes of regional consortia and others in a robust and credible way. This unit should be in place by November 2011.

R4. We recommend that in order to minimise inconsistency and unnecessary duplication DCELLS takes on the coordinating role in developing policies and strategies, including the National Literacy Policy and the forthcoming National Numeracy Policy, on the clear understanding that this is a facilitating role. We believe we need to move away from 22 local authority education departments and other organisations trying to resolve these matters individually. This is to be in place by September 2011.

R5. We recommend that DCELLS takes the lead in developing a single national IT data platform. This platform should hold information about the performance of schools, FE colleges, local authorities, regional consortia and other providers. The information should be accessible and understandable, and available to all with an interest, including parents. This would complement the reports published by Estyn following periodic inspection. The platform should be in place not later than January 2013.




R6. We recommend that DCELLS in partnership with schools, FE and other providers should create a new, straightforward and single database for all post-16 education that combines the data fields of Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) for managers in schools and FE. This should be in place by January 2013.

R7. We recommend that a national target for school surplus places be established at a maximum of 10 per cent across Wales. Local authorities should be required to revisit their plans to rationalise their schools estate. Authorities must ensure that there is dialogue with neighbouring authorities and other providers. Issues such as Welsh-medium education, additional learning needs (ALN) and special learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD) provision, and the future of small primary schools and schools with small sixth forms must be considered both locally and within regions. Revised plans should be submitted to DCELLS by December 2012. For some local authority education departments this will require minimal work. Capital resource allocation should be judged in this context.

R8. We support the review of funding of the 16–19 age range commissioned by the current Minister. We recommend that this should include an examination of issues relating to curriculum choice, unproductive competition between providers, the best use of capital resources and removal of surplus places. A clear analysis of the provision required for learners who wish to follow courses through the medium of the Welsh language must be considered. This review should be completed by December 2012.

R9. We recommend that a single method of assessing literacy and numeracy in the post-16 environment is developed. Any such methodology should link with the form of assessment utilised by PISA and, once developed and agreed, it should be made compulsory. It should be in place by August 2012.

R10. We believe that all vocational post-16 provision should progress the learner to employment. Therefore, we recommend that by the end of 2011, DCELLS should publish guidance to ensure that all such provision, whether provided through work-based learning (WBL) or FE, includes suitable work experience to enable them to secure employment on completion of their training.



R11. We recommend that rationalisation of FE colleges in Wales and their estates should be continued, and – taking into account issues of geography, faith and language – move from the current 21 FE institutions to the establishment of between 8–12 FE corporate entities by August 2013. Further analysis is required of the structures and providers that deliver work-based learning so that there is improved coherence in the system.

R12. We recommend that by September 2011 the four current regional consortia should be given a clear leadership role in:

- a) driving up educational attainment and performance consistently across their entire region
- b) ensuring close and effective collaboration between all providers in their region
- c) securing effective and efficient service delivery.

R13. We recommend that the four current local authority regional consortia be formalised and underpinned by a local government political mandate. This must not be a new tier of government but rather in the context of individual local authority education departments acknowledging that it is essential to cooperate to ensure both economy of scale and the delivery of high-quality services. This is to be in place by September 2011.

R14. To provide impetus and clarity of function we propose that a consortium director be selected for each region by the relevant senior elected members. These consortium directors should work in full collaboration with all partners in their region, including FE colleges and other providers. This should be in place by November 2011.

R15. We recommend that there should be four regional consortia-wide school improvement services to support and challenge schools operational at the latest by April 2012.

R16. We recommend that a clear support and challenge framework must be produced by each regional consortium, in consultation with schools. Simple structures of accountability and performance need to be established. This should be in place by April 2012.

R17. We believe that parents, guardians and carers play a vital role in their children's education. We recommend that a coordinated, multi-agency approach be undertaken where appropriate to support children and families. This should be consistently implemented across local authorities under the leadership of the regional consortia. This should be in place by April 2012.



R18. We recommend that regional consortia should ensure that a robust and consistent approach is taken across their area to identifying children with additional learning needs from the earliest years, and that appropriate intervention and support strategies are put in place for learners. This should be in place by April 2012.

R19. We recommend that each regional consortium should develop a clear, overarching approach to improving boys' reading and writing, and to promoting the achievement of pupils in receipt of free school meals. This is to be done from September 2011 onwards.

R20. We recommend that regional consortia should identify schools in each constituent local authority which are consistently underperforming at the end of Key Stage 2 and 3 assessments, in order that clear time bound improvement targets may be established and that concerted effective support may be provided. This is to be done from September 2011.

R21. We recommend that regional consortia should ensure that clusters of primary and secondary schools develop common clearly differentiated schemes of work for Key Stage 2 pupils, with secondary partners assuming the responsibility for ensuring continuity for differentiation and challenge in Key Stage 3. Moreover, that the teaching of the skills curriculum, particularly the application of literacy and numeracy, remains effectively differentiated and is appropriately challenging for all pupils, including the most able. This is to be done from September 2011.

R22. We recommend that each regional consortium should drive improvement, so that, as a minimum, no school in Wales should be classified as unsatisfactory following Estyn inspection by September 2012; and moreover so that, by the end of September 2015, no school in Wales should be classified as either unsatisfactory or adequate. A significant challenge therefore for the benefit of all learners.


R23. We recommend that regional consortia should look carefully at the opportunities that will emerge through collaboration to provide high-quality support services delivering financial savings which can be diverted directly to the front line of teaching and learning. Headteachers and others, as a right, need to engage with regional consortia on these matters and the whole process should be conducted in a timely fashion. This is to be ongoing from June 2011.

R24. We recommend that, in order to help in the process of identifying resources that can be released for transfer to the front line and to provide clarity, transparency and comparability, DCELLS be charged with establishing a detailed revised national template for Section 52 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 annual local government financial reports. This template should be in place for the financial year 2012–2013.

R25. We recommend that, in terms of finance, the guiding principle should be that funding goes directly to the level where delivery and performance lies, be that school, clusters of schools, FE colleges, regional consortia or nationally. For example, in respect of the School Effectiveness Framework composite grant, 85 per cent of the funding should go directly to school bank accounts. Allied to this is the presumption that there would not be a 'bidding' process for revenue funding held by DCELLS and others unless there is an exceptional and compelling reason to do so (for example to comply with European funding requirements). Funding should also be accompanied at all levels with an annual remit letter or equivalent setting out the outcomes, learner attainment and improvement goals that would be expected of the recipient. These statements would form the basis of performance assessment. Each region should publish an annual performance improvement report. This is to be in place for 2012/13 academic year.

R26. Although we recognise that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in relation to certain initiatives is best served by a national programme or through regional consortia, it is our view that head-teachers are best placed to control the CPD budgets for their schools. We recommend therefore that school CPD budgets should be delegated by local authorities to school bank accounts. This is to be done by April 2012.

R27. Currently there is no CPD plan that follows a teacher or lecturer through from Initial Teacher Training (ITT) to National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and beyond. Other professionals also work in schools and colleges and we recognise that they too need to have the opportunity to develop their skills. We recommend that DCELLS should facilitate a debate involving all stakeholders, including teaching unions, so that there is clarity of purpose and entitlement of provision established for all. As regional consortia evolve there will be the need for colleagues from schools, FE colleges and other providers to share training. A national strategy needs to be in place and operating by April 2012.



R28. We recommend that national literacy and numeracy tests should be introduced at the beginning of Year 2 and Year 5. These tests must be standardised and diagnostic. These tests should be in place from September 2011.

R29. We recommend that rigorous statutory baseline assessment and end of Key Stage 2/3 assessment moderation exercises be undertaken at regional consortia and local authority level. This should be implemented cyclically from September 2011.

R30. We recommend that compulsory and standardised training of governors and clerks to governing bodies is required. Suitable materials should be developed by DCELLS and the delivery coordinated through regional consortia. Training for chairpersons, new governors and governors involved in the performance management of head teachers should be a priority. We note that a review of governance in FE is due to be published. This is to be ongoing from June 2011.

R31. We recommend that all governors should be provided with at least a standardised set of performance data to enable them to undertake effectively their challenge and support role. The data set should be defined by DCELLS and delivered through regional consortia. This is to be ongoing from June 2011.

R32. We recommend that the Minister publishes an annual report which both evaluates progress and sets priorities for improvement for all stakeholders and partners involved in the education of our learners.

R33. We recommend that an in-depth review should be conducted in the autumn of 2013 to determine whether there is need for further structural change to deliver the best possible education in Wales.

A summary table of our recommendations is at Appendix 1.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Our objective and terms of reference

1. This Review of the Structure of Education Services in Wales was announced by the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning Skills, Leighton Andrews, in a Written Statement to the National Assembly for Wales on 14 October 2010. The full text of the Minister's statement is at Appendix 2.

2. In his statement, the Minister said that his objective was:

"to ensure that the education system is structured in a way that it will deliver sustained improvement to learner attainment across Wales."

He also said that the review should:

"take a long-term, whole system view on whether education structures enable and support the delivery of best value services to the citizens of Wales."

And he gave us the following terms of reference:

The group will consider the case for change to existing service structures and governance arrangements and, in particular which education services:

- a) should be provided at national level
- b) should be provided at Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) regional consortia level
- c) should be provided at local authority level
- d) should be devolved to providers, including schools or clusters of schools
- e) should be provided on another organisational basis.

The group will also identify the implications for funding, planning and governance of services arising from the above points.

3. Our remit extends widely across education in Wales, and we have interpreted it broadly. As well as schools, local authorities and further education institutions, we have examined, for example, modern apprenticeships and work-based learning, including the contribution of third sector and independent training providers, other adult learning and the careers guidance service. Our remit does not extend to higher education institutions, but we have considered initial teacher training, which is delivered by higher education.



Our review process

4. We have placed great importance throughout our review on hearing a wide range of views. We have aimed to consult as many institutions and individuals as possible, and we have adopted several different methods to do so. These are outlined below.

Written consultation

At an early stage in our work we wrote to a large number of stakeholders across Wales and invited them to send us written evidence. A copy of our consultation letter is at Appendix 3.

Evidence sessions

As a group, we held a series of evidence sessions between December 2010 and February 2011.

Individual meetings

Members of the review group also met a wide range of stakeholders individually, in a more informal context.


5. We are very grateful to all the people who have helped us in our work: some represented the views of their organisations or members, others shared with us their personal views, and some did both. All did so in a spirit of openness, collaboration and shared common purpose. We thank them all. They are listed in Appendix 4.

Data

6. As well as taking written evidence and discussing issues with stakeholders, we have placed great importance, as a group, on gathering and interrogating a wide range of statistical and financial data, including learner outcomes, institutional performance, budgets and expenditure. We wanted our report to be founded on robust evidence; but beyond that, we also believe that the effective use of such data is crucial to driving up performance at all levels across education in Wales. We say more about this in the body of our report

Looking beyond Wales

7. Although our focus is, of course, education in Wales, we have not looked at Wales in isolation. We have compared the performance and delivery of education in Wales with what happens in the other countries of the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world.



We have heard and read evidence about best practice in many other places. We think it is crucially important that the education community in Wales does not become inward looking. Our learners have a right to expect a world class education, and we all need to look at and learn from the very best practice, wherever it is. Again, we say more about this in the body of our report.

Relentless focus on the learner

8. Much of our work has involved looking at structures and services, strategic policy and financial management. But we have been determined to keep at the front of our consideration, in all our discussions with contributors as well as in our own thinking, that education is about learners. What matters about structures and services, above all, is whether they serve the individual learner well.

9. This is what the chair of the review group said about our approach in our letter to stakeholders at the start of this process. We repeat it now:

“The Minister has been very forthright in some of his comments with regards to educational issues in Wales. In that spirit therefore and so that there is no ambiguity, without prejudicing the recommendations that we may make, I am fully aware that it is the quality of teaching and learning that occurs in classrooms and lecture theatres that is of paramount importance.

We will be placing the future of our children and young people, their teachers and lecturers firmly at the forefront of our deliberations. It is not our intention to try and save money but rather to make recommendations to deploy current and future resources in an effective and efficient way that will both benefit those that are working at the very front line of teaching and the children and young people in their care. The structures that we have for delivering high quality education in Wales should be fit for that purpose.”



The structure of our report

10. In keeping with our determination to focus first and foremost on the individual learner, we begin in Chapter 2 by asking the question, how well does education in Wales serve learners now? What can they expect? How well do learner outcomes in Wales compare with what happens elsewhere? How consistent are learner outcomes across Wales? How quickly are outcomes improving?

11. In Chapter 3 we set out our starting hypotheses: what do we as a group consider to be the guiding principles against which education services and structures should be assessed? These are the principles which have guided our thinking as we examine what happens, and what should happen, at each delivery level.

12. In Chapters 4 and 5 we consider education structures and services, starting with education for ages 3–19, then considering further education and lifelong learning and skills training.

13. We then look at the wider governmental context: local government (Chapter 6) and national government (Chapter 7).

14. In Chapter 8 we take a broad, system-wide look at financial management issues and funding flows.

15. Our principal conclusions and our recommendations are set out at the beginning of our report.

Our web page

16. We have gathered in the course of our work a wide range of written contributions, including notes on good practice and some data sets, which are too large for inclusion in this report. We have arranged for these to be published on the Welsh Assembly Government internet site. They can be found on the same page as this report.

Chapter 2: Overview of education in Wales

1. This report is mainly about structures and services, strategic policy and financial management, but we made it clear in our correspondence with stakeholders that a prime focus would be on our learners and the quality of provision and experience that they receive in classrooms, lecture theatres and vocational workshop facilities.
2. How well therefore are they currently served?
3. In terms of outcomes the most recent hard statistical evidence comes from two sources. Firstly the information gained from the PISA results and secondly the information found in the recently published Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales.
4. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) compares the performance of pupils in Wales at the age of 15 to that of their contemporaries receiving education all over the world. Some 15,000 pupils were tested in 67 countries, specifically in reading, mathematics and science. Pupils from Wales took part in a similar test in 2006 and the results of the two cohorts are as follows:

Table 1: PISA results for Wales

	2006 score	2009 score	Change	Rank out of 67 countries 2009
Reading	481	476	-5	38
Maths	484	472	-12	40
Science	505	496	-9	30

Source: OECD

5. The vast majority of educators, officials and parents accept that we have not improved our position, indeed we have regressed during the past three years. A very small number of people argue that due to the nature of the test, and the forms of teaching methodology that we use in Wales particularly to meet the requirements of GCSE and other examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 that the results are unfair as far as children in Wales are concerned.

6. The same argument cannot be used when comparing performance with the other countries within the United Kingdom. In the main, pupils from Wales, England and Northern Ireland take the same examination at the GCSE level. Pupils from Wales can and do take examinations provided by examination boards that are based outside Wales. Similarly, pupils from England and Northern Ireland can access examinations provided by the WJEC.

7. How therefore do we compare with our immediate neighbours?

Table 2: PISA results for the UK by country

	Reading		Maths		Science	
	2006	2009	2006	2009	2006	2009
England	496	494	495	493	516	515
Scotland	499	500	506	499	515	514
Northern Ireland	495	499	494	492	508	511
Wales	481	476	484	472	505	496

Source: OECD

A table showing how the UK compares among the top 30 countries included in PISA is at Appendix 5.

8. Regrettably therefore, not only are we not performing as well as our neighbours, arguably we have fallen back from our position in 2006. There are also significant differences between the highest performing pupils and lowest performing pupils in reading, mathematics and science and between the performance of boys and girls. The full PISA report for Wales may be accessed on: www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/oecd-programme-for-international-student-assessment-oecd-pisa/

9. The most recent Estyn Annual Report indicates that:

“Overall standards of education and training in Wales have been maintained or improved since 2004, but improvement has been slow particularly in schools. Overall standards were not as good as they should have been in over 30% of maintained schools. Standards in very few schools and providers are consistently outstanding. Since 2004 we have judged the provision to be good with outstanding features in only 8% of all maintained schools.”

The full report may be seen at www.estyn.gov.uk

10. The information secured through analysing PISA results and the impartial information gained through analysing the Report of Estyn indicates that we have issues to consider and to pretend that all is well serves no purpose. Further data may be significant when comparing outcomes in Wales to those in the other countries within the UK.

11. The system of examinations in Scotland is different to those in the other three countries at the end of our Key Stage 4 and therefore it may be inappropriate to make a direct comparison, but relevant comparisons may be made with England and Northern Ireland. It should be noted that year groups are numbered differently in Northern Ireland when compared to Wales, but the age of pupils remains the same. Additionally, the schools that we define as secondary in Wales are defined as post primary in Northern Ireland.

12. The full range of statistics relating to outcomes in England may be seen at www.education.gov.uk and for Northern Ireland at www.deni.gov.uk. Here again, by the time pupils reach Key Stage 4 we have fallen behind both England and Northern Ireland as far as academic performance is concerned.

13. Where are we therefore in Wales? Since 1996 we have seen the formation of 22 local authorities with statutory functions and 22 education departments. Improving the quality of education provision and standards has been on the agenda. How well have we done? We include a comparison of where we were in 1996 and where we now are at the end of Key Stage 4 (Appendix 6).

14. Clearly therefore though we can demonstrate that improvements have taken place as far as outcomes are concerned, there are significant differences between the rate of improvement in local authorities generally and often when performance at various Key Stages are analysed. There is a danger in analysing raw data that like for like comparisons are difficult to make, however when value added analyses are considered then again there are significant differences to be found.

15. We have no intention of comparing the performance of schools by name, however significant differences may be found when comparing similar schools in terms of pupil performance in the context of certain deprivation factors such as the percentages of children in receipt of free school meals (FSM). Much good work is currently continuing in the context of 'families of like schools', nevertheless it is legitimate to ask why there are discrepancies in performance between like schools.



16. The performance of the FE sector is noted elsewhere.

17. It is also interesting to compare performance as seen in the subject areas that are taught compulsorily at various key stages. An example may be found in the summary tables at Key Stage 3 for all schools and all subjects in 2010 (Appendix 7).

18. Consequently, the most recent summary tables available demonstrate that differences may be found between outcomes in the various subject areas with performance in Welsh as a second language significantly different to other non-core subjects. Various Estyn reports demonstrate that there are sometimes variations in pupil performance between subject areas in an individual school.

19. There have been reviews and reports relating to children with additional learning needs (ALN) in the school and FE sector. We do not intend here to rehearse yet again the arguments for taking action to help a significant group of young people who need very specialised help, these are self-evident and a range of policies have been created to help this group of children and young people. It is clearly understood that provision at the national, regional and very local is called for. Whether or not this provision is available consistently across all 22 local authorities in Wales is a matter of debate.

20. Other factors are present that potentially can affect both pupil performance and effective and efficient use of resources.

21. Demographic factors such as the rise and fall of pupil numbers nationally and in different areas of the country will impact upon the necessary provision that we have at present and may need in the future. A table showing projected pupil numbers is at Appendix 8.

22. Surplus places continue to cause difficulties. Some local authorities have made considerable strides in reducing surplus places over a period of time. Some properly link this to issues concerning school improvement. There does not appear to be a consistent approach right across Wales in this context.

23. We are a bilingual nation. Welsh is taught to every child up to the age of 16-years-old. We have national policies in this respect. Are they being delivered? Consequently, does this picture show that education in Wales currently is serving our learners well? Is the status quo an option? People and organisations who have offered evidence to us or commented upon our current position have argued not only that we can do better but also that we **must** do better.

Chapter 3: Hypotheses

- 1.** As part of the process of evaluating where we really are currently in Wales in terms of both the delivery of education and the quality of education that is being offered, we developed a series of hypotheses and questions that might help us in our task. The first, a challenge that could elicit a yes or no response appears straightforward enough. In Wales we currently deliver education to all pupils and students that truly is of the highest world class quality. Rhetoric or reality? A debate could no doubt be constructed as to what is meant by 'world class quality', and there is more to providing excellent education than may be seen in examination results alone. However the achievement of our pupils and students is of fundamental importance to the pupils, their parents and teachers and indeed to society as they mature and enter the world of work.
- 2.** In looking at the structures that exist for the delivery of education in Wales, it is fair to ask the question as to whether the current structures are effective, efficient and fit for purpose. If this is the case, then there is no need to change. We should continue as we are. Is it fair to accept that the purpose of any structures that help deliver education is to serve the needs of all learners, and does the current situation in Wales demonstrate without ambiguity that this is the case?
- 3.** We then looked at a series of issues relating to strategies that might help improve the quality of education that we offer learners. Should appropriate comparative data within Wales and with our neighbours in the UK and indeed the wider world be available in a clear form so that parents, educators, governors, politicians, pupils and students can make reliable judgements? However well we may be doing in part or in whole we took the view that educational outcomes can, and must, be significantly improved and as part of that process a reordering of 'who does what and where' may well be required in the interests of transparency, quality improvement and accountability.
- 4.** Schools and colleges, teachers, head teachers, principals and other professionals who work at the level of an institution have the fundamental responsibility and role of improving the quality of teaching and learning that continues in our classrooms and lecture theatres. Governing bodies have a fundamental role to play as do parents. Moreover the roles of local authorities in discharging their statutory functions are clear. The roles that these local authorities and other advisory and consultant services play in 'school improvement' may be seen and the role of Estyn in providing an independent assessment of where we are in terms of quality, properly enshrined in statute.



5. FE colleges, which were made independent of local government in 1993, nevertheless have significant roles to play. Private providers contribute to the process. The role that higher education (HE) education departments play in the initial training of teachers is clear. DCELLS at a national level is charged with advising the Minister with responsibility for education and to develop policies that will have an effect on all aspects of education in Wales.

6. What may not be so clear is whether those constituent parts are currently working as effectively as possible in moving forward the improvement agenda and in delivering education in its many parts in an effective and efficient way, with the needs of learners being placed firmly at the centre of everything that we do.

7. Coming to a view as to whether sufficient money is available for education and if resources are used effectively and efficiently are questions that have to be faced. How do we compare in terms of the resource provision with England and other countries within the UK? Are there discrepancies between the resources provided at individual local authority levels and is there a link between the provision of money and pupil performance? We take the view that providing resources that can be used effectively at the very front line of education is essential. To achieve that position there are implications for many stakeholders and a requirement to provide a suitable timetable that will allow for the management of change. We are educating children, young people and learners of all ages currently and would want to provide them with the best possible range of opportunities as they progress through our education system.

8. A focus therefore on the learner and leadership at all levels, political and professional. Challenge and support at all levels and transparency, accountability and good governance firmly in place. Celebrating achievement and confronting robustly poor performance at every level be it individual or organisational. Using the data that we have effectively and the skills, talent and expertise of people involved in the process of delivering education and training in a coherent fashion. Continuing professional development for educators should be a right not a privilege, improvement in outcomes for all learners the firm expectation.

9. These are issues facing everyone with a stake in education. Our work alone will not resolve all the challenges that we face but we hope that we will be of help in moving forward the improvement agenda over the next period of years. It is not our intention to conduct a witch hunt and apportion praise and blame but to try and understand why we are in our current position, learn from our significant achievements and our mistakes and draw a line in order that we can move on.

Chapter 4: Education 3–19

Context setting

1. The delivery of the curriculum for 3 to 16-year-olds in Wales undertook the most significant reform since the 1944 Education Act with the publication of The National Curriculum in Wales in 1987. By 1988 the first version of the national curriculum in Wales was being implemented. The Wales version of the national curriculum had several substantive differences to its equivalent in England. Two of the more significant differences were the compulsory teaching of Welsh as a second language to all pupils between the ages of 5 and 16 and the introduction of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. The latter focused particularly on Welsh life, history, culture and tradition.

2. The curriculum was divided into five sections. The curriculum for 3 and 4-year-olds was known as Early Years. That for 5 to 7-year-olds was called Key Stage 1, for 8 to 11-year-olds Key Stage 2, for 12 to 14-year-olds Key Stage 3 and for 15 and 16-year-olds Key Stage 4. Key Stage 4 remained the stage in which pupils selected external examination choices.

3. The national curriculum in Wales consists of the following statutory subjects:

- English/Welsh first language*
- mathematics
- science
- Welsh second language
- design and technology
- information technology
- history
- geography
- art
- music
- physical education.

* There is no statutory requirement to teach English at Key Stage 1 in Welsh-medium schools.

In addition the curriculum consists of religious education (RE) and personal and social education (PSE), and primary schools are required to have a policy on sex education.

Assessment and the national curriculum

4. The assessment of the curriculum in Wales was undertaken by the Curriculum Council for Wales (CCW) a separate body to that charged with the same function in England. The Curriculum Council for Wales subsequently became the Qualification, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales/Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (ACCAC).

5. Early years baseline assessments were made statutory for 4-year-olds. A number of local baseline assessment schemes were approved by ACCAC to measure the skills of children on entering and leaving early years education. Summative end of key stage statutory testing and teacher assessments were introduced for the core subjects of English/Welsh first language, mathematics and science as the principle means of measuring progress for each of the key stages. The language components were separated into oracy, reading and writing. Mathematics was subdivided into using and applying mathematics, number and algebra, and shape, space and measures. Science was further broken down into scientific enquiry, life processes and living things, materials and their properties, and physical processes. Each of these subsections required assessment. The national curriculum was split into 10 levels, each with its own level descriptors. At the age of 7 pupils were expected to attain Level 2 or above in assessment, by age 11 they are expected to attain Level 4 or above and by 14 years of age they should gain Level 5 or above. More able pupils were expected to gain above these levels. Those who gained the expected level in language, mathematics and science were described as attaining the Core Subject Indicator (CSI).

6. In 2005 as a result of the Daugherty Report statutory end of Key Stage testing was replaced by teacher assessment. An overarching teacher assessment was made for each of the core national curriculum subjects of English/Welsh first language, mathematics and science. Teacher assessment was to be strengthened by moderation and accreditation arrangements. ACCAC was to be remitted to design systems and checks to ensure that teacher assessments were robust and consistent. At the end of Key Stage 3, this was to include secondary schools being awarded accredited centre status. In Key Stage 2, a new style of diagnostic test, which focuses on skills, was to be developed and introduced in Year 5. The information derived from these tests was to help teachers identify individual strengths and weaknesses, which can be developed or addressed in the final year of primary school and which would provide valuable information for secondary schools to work with when pupils change phases.

7. The moderation process for teacher assessment was never introduced and accredited status was not given to secondary schools. There are clear implications for the accuracy of these teacher assessments at key stages when there is no national system of moderation of teacher assessment. There is an urgent need for stringent national teacher moderation at the end of each stage of education. This moderation must be carried out at regional consortium and local levels. This will help secure teachers' knowledge of the levels and key areas of under-attainment. There is a need to subdivide scores so that teachers are aware of those children who have narrowly passed the threshold. We need to concentrate on helping those pupils who narrowly pass the threshold into gaining a more secure Level 2 score.

8. The promised diagnostic test was not introduced. There is subsequently no national system for measuring literacy or numeracy skills at this stage of schooling. An ideal time for the introduction of such a test would be during Year 5 for all the reasons stated at the end of paragraph 6. The introduction of such tests is essential if we are to address inadequate standards of literacy and numeracy in Wales. It is unacceptable that there is no national means of identifying and diagnosing deficiencies in literacy and numeracy skills before pupils enter secondary schooling.

Curriculum review and revision

9. The Early Years and national curriculum have undertaken several reviews since being set in place in 1988. The first review was not a major overhaul of what was to be delivered but more a slimming down of content so that it was more manageable for pupils and their teachers.

10. ACCAC carried out another review of the School Curriculum in Wales between September 1997 and January 1999. The purpose of the review was to ensure that, from 2000 onwards, there existed in Wales a single coherent framework for curriculum and assessment which would help schools to raise standards of achievement and widen educational opportunity.

11. The introduction of the Curriculum 2000 was linked with the publication by the Welsh Assembly Government of *The Learning Country* in the same year. This was a 'paving' document setting out the developmental pathway for education over the next decade. It was followed later by *The Learning Country 2: Vision into Action* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006).



12. Another review of the curriculum took place in 2006. This led to the implementation of a further curriculum reform in 2008. This reform took out much of the prescriptive content of the curriculum. While it kept the same subject areas, it emphasised the need to teach skills rather than prescribed subject content.

13. The development of transferable generic skills for learners underpinned the curriculum revision. A skills framework was set in place. Elements of the skills framework are found in the programmes of study and within the level descriptors. The skills framework identifies aspects of progression for the national average learner from 3 to post-16 years of age. It is disappointing that the skills framework was not made statutory as it would have been a key measure of quality assurance for pupil progression.

14. Significant changes were introduced for the whole range of education for 3 to 7-year-olds. These changes would see the Desirable Outcomes for Early Years and the Key Stage 1 curriculum for 5 to 7-year-olds merged into one programme for 3 to 7-year-olds to be introduced on an incremental basis. This model is called the Foundation Phase.

15. The Foundation Phase places great emphasis on children learning by doing. Young children will be given more opportunities to gain first hand experiences through play and active involvement rather than by completing exercises in books. They should be given time to develop their speaking and listening skills and to become confident in their reading and writing abilities. Mathematics will be more practical so that children can see how problems are solved and how important mathematics is in their everyday lives. There will be more emphasis on children understanding how things work and on finding different ways to solve problems. The first two years of the Foundation Phase require an adult:child ratio of 1:8 while the last two years require a ratio of 1:15. The Foundation Phase will be implemented on an incremental basis over four years from September 2008 to September 2011.

16. During the Foundation Phase children's skills and knowledge are planned across seven Areas of Learning:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
- Mathematical Development
- Welsh Language Development
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development.

Statutory assessment at the end of Key Stage 1

17. Although Key Stage 1 together with its statutory assessment will be phased out from 2011 it is important to examine the assessment outcomes of this key stage from 1999 to the present time. It is equally important that we use the lessons learnt to inform the new statutory assessment of the Foundation Phase.


18. Over the last 11 years the proportion of pupils gaining the required level or higher (Level 2) at the end of Key Stage 1 as measured by teacher assessment in English moved from 81.1 per cent in 1999 to 82.9 per cent in 2010. In 1999 boys were performing 10.4 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 they were 9.8 per cent behind.

19. Over the same period the proportion of pupils gaining the required level or higher (Level 2) at the end of Key Stage 1 as measured by teacher assessment has increased in Welsh first language from 86.9 per cent in 1999 to 90.2 per cent in 2010. In 1999 boys were performing 8.4 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 they were 6.2 per cent behind.

20. The proportion of pupils gaining the required level or higher (Level 2) at the end of Key Stage 1 as measured by teacher assessment has increased in mathematics from 85.4 per cent in 1999 to 87.5 per cent in 2010. In 1999 boys were performing 4.9 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 they were 4.7 per cent behind.

21. In science the progress for all pupils from 1999 to 2010 has been 4.4 per cent bringing the score to 90.3 per cent in 2010. The differential between boys and girls was at 4 per cent in 1999 in favour of girls and in 2010 is 3.7 per cent in favour of girls.

22. Clearly there has been a very slow rate of progress in English and mathematics in particular over the last 11 years. However, at this key stage and in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 some schools have made considerably greater progress over this period than others even though they share the same degrees of socio-economic deprivation. It is essential that their good practice is shared throughout Wales. In the same way some local authorities have made considerably greater improvements than others. Again the good practice of these authorities must be disseminated.




23. Nationally scores in reading and writing are 6.6 per cent and 8.7 per cent respectively below the score for oracy. For boys the gap is 8.1 per cent for reading and a worrying 11.5 per cent for writing. For girls the gap is round about 5 per cent for both. In mathematics the lowest performance is in using and applying mathematics. The scores do not outline those pupils who narrowly passed the Level 2 threshold. Traditionally there has been a sub categorisation of Level 2 into 2a, 2b and 2c with 2c being the proportion of pupils who narrowly pass the threshold. Those pupils in the 2c range are often those who subsequently do not reach the standards expected of them at 11 and 14 years of age let alone at 16.

Assessment at the end of the Foundation Phase

24. A national consultation on the revised *Framework for Children's Learning for the Foundation Phase* was held between January 8 and March 30 2007. An agency, Beaufort Research, was appointed to analyse the questionnaire responses. Two reports were produced by the agency; the reports produced by Beaufort Research are available on www.wales.gov.uk/consultations

25. A significant number of respondents felt that the framework did not place enough emphasis on listening as a key skill to developing children's Language, Literacy and Communication skills. A considerable number of respondents noted their support for the statement that much of their work should be oral and practical. This is understandable but there must also be the translation of these practical skills into reading and writing activities. As we have already stated standards are not as high as they could be at the end of the current Key Stage 1. If we are not careful standards will regress rather than improve because of the introduction of the Foundation Phase. This must not be allowed to happen. The assessment model for Foundation Phase must ensure that experiential learning is linked in an enjoyable and meaningful way for children to effective reading, writing and the use of mathematics. Standards must improve above the current national levels. If we do not lay the foundations correctly how can Wales expect to raise standards later in children's school careers?

26. At present there is no diagnostic reading and numeracy test applied at the end of the current Key Stage 1. Such tests must be introduced before the end of the Foundation Phase.



27. From the very earliest all possible opportunities must be taken to engage parents in the Foundation Phase and prior to this through various under three groups. This is particularly the case in areas of high deprivation. Programmes such as Sure Start and Flying Start must be applied and constantly quality assured for outcomes in such areas. A rigorous form of baseline assessment for children on entering the Foundation Phase must be developed on a national basis and implemented consistently across the country. In order to achieve this consistency there must ongoing moderation and training for moderation at consortium, local authority and school levels.

28. Early identification procedures must be implemented at regional and school levels for the early identification of children with additional learning needs. Tools for assessing and measuring the progress of children with additional learning needs must be set in place throughout the four years of the Foundation Phase.

Statutory assessment at the end of Key Stage 2


29. Over the last 11 years the proportion of pupils gaining the required level or higher (Level 4) at the end of Key Stage 2 as measured by teacher assessment in English moved from 66.9 per cent in 1999 to 81.9 per cent in 2010. As in Key Stage 1 girls have continually out performed boys. In 1999 boys were performing 12 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 they were 9.8 per cent behind.

30. Scores for Welsh first language improved from 63.2 per cent in 1999 to 81 per cent in 2010. In 1999 boys were performing 13.4 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 they were 10.1 per cent behind.

31. In mathematics teacher assessments increased from 69 per cent in 1999 to 83.3 per cent in 2010. In 1999 boys were performing 2.3 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 they were 3.6 per cent behind.

32. In science the progress for all pupils from 1999 to 2010 has been 12.4 per cent bringing the score to 88.5 per cent in 2010. The differential between boys and girls was at 2.1 per cent in 1999 in favour of girls and in 2010 is 4.1 per cent in favour of girls.

33. Although there has been a great deal of progress generally at this key stage the gap between boys' and girls' performance is too wide, while it has closed slightly in English and Welsh first language it has increased in mathematics and science. The number of pupils attaining Level 5 needs to improve. There is also a need to introduce a system for measuring those pupils who narrowly attain Level 4. This would work the same as the system identified in paragraph 23 above.



34. Significantly lower numbers of pupils scored Level 4 or above in writing than for reading and oracy both in English and Welsh first language. Scores were lower in using and applying mathematics and scientific enquiry than they were in the other component parts of the assessment.

35. A standardised reading comprehension test and a numeracy test should be introduced nationally in Year 5 so that deficiencies can be addressed prior to transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Current anecdotal evidence suggests that significant numbers of pupils who gain Level 4 in English/Welsh first language have reading ages below their chronological age on entry to secondary education. We need national diagnostic data so that standards can improve at this transition point. The literacy and numeracy generic skills tests recommended as part of the Daugherty Report in 2005 must be introduced so we can address deficiencies in literacy and numeracy prior to transfer into secondary schooling. It is not acceptable that such a testing system and diagnosis does not exist.

Statutory assessment at the end of Key Stage 3


36. Over the last 11 years the proportion of pupils gaining the required level or higher (Level 5) at the end of Key Stage 3 as measured by teacher assessment in English moved from 62.3 per cent in 1999 to 72.5 per cent in 2010. As in Key Stages 1 and 2 girls have continually outperformed boys, the widest gap of all the key stages occurs at Key Stage 3. In 1999 boys were performing 16.7 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 they were still 14.9 per cent behind.

37. Scores for Welsh first language improved from 71.2 per cent in 1999 to 75.5 per cent in 2010. In 1999 boys were performing 16.1 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 the differential has slightly increased to 16.5 per cent behind.

38. In mathematics teacher assessments increased from 62.3 per cent in 1999 to 83.3 per cent in 2010. In 1999 boys were performing 2.5 per cent behind the girls; by 2010 they were 3.7 per cent behind.

39. In science the progress for all pupils from 1999 to 2010 has been 17.9 per cent bringing the score to 77.1 per cent in 2010. The differential between boys and girls was at 1.9 per cent in 1999 in favour of girls and in 2010 is 5.9 per cent in favour of girls.

40. Again significant progress has been made in overall scores but not enough headway has been made in reducing the gender gap in attainment. A point shared with both the previous key stages. Again there is a need to improve the numbers of pupils gaining the higher scores of Levels 6 and 7.



41. As in Key Stages 1 and 2 significantly lower numbers of pupils scored Level 5 or above in writing than for reading and oracy both in English and Welsh first language. Scores were lower in using and applying mathematics and scientific enquiry than they were in the other component parts of the assessment.

Statutory assessment at the end of Key Stage 4

42. The percentage of students gaining the Level 2 threshold has increased by 22.1 per cent since 1996. The percentage gaining the Core Subject Indicator has increased by 15.9 per cent over the same period. As with the other key stages girls outperform boys in each of these indicators. In 1996 the differential for the Level 2 threshold was 10.1 per cent it is now 10.2 per cent. For the Core Subject indicator it was 6.2 per cent in 1996 and is now 6 per cent. Over the last four years data has been collected on the numbers of students gaining the Level 2 threshold inclusive of English/Welsh first language and mathematics. Again girls perform better than boys. The differential was 8 per cent in 2007; in 2010 it is 7.2 per cent.

43. There is considerable underachievement at each key stage for students in receipt of free schools meals (FSM) by comparison with those not in receipt of FSM. This becomes marked at the end of Key Stage 4. When making a comparison of the percentages of students in these two groups who attain the Level 2 threshold inclusive of English/Welsh first language and mathematics across the 22 local authorities the authority with the lowest attainment gap between the two groups still registers a 28 per cent difference. It is nearly 40 per cent in the authority with the widest gap. Teaching and learning programmes which are proven to narrow this gap must be rapidly set in place. We must work together to overcome the impact of deprivation.

PISA

44. The Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) is well established and internationally respected. PISA tests the extent to which students near the end of their compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills needed for adult life and are able to apply them. Students are assessed on their competence to address real life challenges involving reading, maths and science. The tests take place every three years with a random selection of pupils throughout Wales.

45. In 2009 in both reading and mathematics Wales' mean score was significantly lower than the OECD average and our UK counterparts. In science we performed at around the OECD average

but significantly below the performance of other UK countries. In all three domains the mean score for Wales and our international 'ranking' was lower than in 2006. The tables shown summarise the mean scores in each of the three PISA domains with a comparison to the 2006 results for Wales.

Reading

	2006	2009	Change
Mean score	481	476	-5

Mathematics

	2006	2009	Change
Mean score	484	472	-12

Science

	2006	2009	Change
Mean score	505	496	-9

46. PISA is a robust measure of the relative performance of educational systems. These results cannot be justified on the basis of low socio-economic status or the bilingual nature of our nation and education system. They cannot be excused by relative funding levels – Finland has similar per capita spend to Wales on education and yet performs consistently very highly in PISA assessments; Luxembourg spends far more than Wales per pupil but their PISA scores are no better than ours in reading and lower in science; New Zealand spends less per capita than we do but significantly outperforms us.

47. Many headteachers believe there is little correlation between the skills required by the PISA tests and those required for GCSE English/Welsh first language, mathematics and science or other equivalent Level 2 qualifications. There is an urgent need for an analysis of how PISA differs from the Level 2 qualification syllabi. It is clear that the skills required for success in PISA tests are good standards of reading and writing, numeracy skills and the ability to use and apply language and numeracy to solve problems. It is no accident that end of key stage assessments indicate a deficiency in the scores for writing and for using and applying mathematics and science. A concentrated effort needs to be made in these key stages to develop those elements. Suitable learning and teaching materials need to be set in place to extend the current national curriculum and encourage and develop independent learning. These materials need to be complemented by similar materials for Key Stage 4. The latter materials need to concentrate on problem solving and the development of learner resilience to complete tasks.



Post-16 curriculum

48. There have been three key curriculum developments for students in this age range over the last decade. The first has been the development of Learning Pathways which start at the age of 14 and progress to 19. This area covers Key Stage 4 as well as post-16 education and training. The next was the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate programme while the third was the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009.

Learning Pathways

49. Following the publication of the Learning Country in 2001 the Welsh Assembly Government issued guidance on Learning Pathways, which set out expectations for transforming provision for 14 to 19 year-olds. The policy is focused on extending choice and flexibility of study for learners by providing them with individual learning pathways intended to meet their needs. 14–19 funding is a significant issue. Revenue funding in the order of £80 million in addition to capital funding has been made available for partnership working over the last four years. Nevertheless, it is relevant to question, in the light of the Estyn 2011 Annual Report evidence, if appropriate headway and progress have been made. The report indicates that improvement has not been made uniformly and there is clearly a very mixed picture across Wales. The situation is complicated by the fact the programme is grant funded rather than mainstream funded and consequently causes a lack of commitment by educational establishment leaders. The examples of good practice quoted in the appendices are exceptional and merit further examination by other providers.

50. As a result of the introduction of the Learning Pathways 14–19 each local education authority was required to set up 14–19 Networks, local partnership bodies leading on extending the range of available 14–19 pathways for learners. The Networks are required to implement Welsh Assembly Government national policy on 14–19 and to move forward across all of the six elements of the Learning Pathways Guidance 11, namely:

- individual learning pathways
- wider choice and flexibility
- the learning core which should include work focused experience and community participation
- learning coach development/support

- agreed personal support
- careers education, advice and guidance.

51. Each Network produces an Annual Network Development Plan (ANDP) which documents longer term strategic priorities as well as the main activities and actions for the current financial year. The Welsh Assembly Government allocated a grant of £19.66 million to Networks in local authorities in 2010–2011 for the 14–19 initiative to move forward the six key elements of the Learning Pathways and to meet statutory requirements under the Learning Measure by 2012. In previous years similar allocations were made as well as capital allocations.

Welsh Baccalaureate

52. By September 2010, 172 secondary schools (77 per cent of the total), nearly all further education institutions and many work-based learning providers were offering the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification at advanced, intermediate and foundation levels. Estyn maintains that:

“During this period, the proportion of students attaining the award improved significantly. Attainment was better in the advanced diploma by comparison with the intermediate and foundation diplomas. Results published in August 2010 showed that 4,360 students (81% of those who completed the programme) gained the Welsh Baccalaureate advanced diploma in 2009–2010. This year saw the first awards of the Welsh Baccalaureate intermediate and foundation diplomas since their roll out across the full 14 to 19 age range.”

53. In relation to the currency of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, Estyn says that:

“More universities across the United Kingdom take account of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification when considering applications from students. The advanced qualification has a tariff of 120 points which is equivalent to an A grade at A level. There are examples of students receiving offers where the total point score they need includes the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification at 120 points. In other cases, the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification has been included in the offer, but not at the full tariff level.”

54. However, Estyn goes on to say that:


“there are inconsistencies between departments and universities in the extent to which they take account of the qualification. Learners who attain the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification do not all achieve the same standards although the tariff value of the qualification is the same for all. Grading the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification in the way that A levels are graded would reflect learners’ level of attainment better and would add to the credibility of the qualification with higher education admissions officers.”

55. When the qualification was first introduced, there were weaknesses in how providers delivered it and this had a negative effect on learners’ success rates. Some learners were unable to cope with the demands of the qualification on top of their other courses, and Estyn maintains that ‘key skills were poorly taught and poorly integrated with the rest of the learners’ studies’ and now, ‘many centres have now improved their provision for key skills by integrating key skills assessment with A-level subject assignments and by tracking learners’ progress carefully.’

The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009

56. In 2009, the Assembly introduced the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure and Guidance. The Measure gave learners a right to a minimum number of option choices and required educational providers to work together to deliver a range of courses. The measure states that a ‘local curriculum’ should offer a minimum of 30 courses of study at Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 3 with a minimum of five general courses and five vocational courses. Schools, further education institutions and other providers are to work together to form this local curriculum.

57. Where a tertiary system does not operate schools and further education institutions have been working in consortia. In some instances this has led to common timetables and students travelling between providers. This approach has ensured that learners, especially those in small sixth forms, have had access to their entitlement as defined by the Measure. However, the picture across Wales is extremely variable and in a number of consortia there remains limited choice and very small groups, particularly in Year 13. There is an urgent need to assess the impact of the measure on levels of student participation, attainment and on the cost effectiveness of delivery. Where students travel between institutions



it is important that the performance of home based and visiting students is compared. Again where there is a highly mobile student body there will be problems in finding enough timetable space to deliver the wider key skills and the six elements of the Learning Pathways guidance (see paragraph 50 above).

58. The Learning and Skills Measure (Wales) 2009 also sets out that for the 14–16 age range with the wider 14–19 group there must be 30 options at Level 2, inclusive of five vocational options offered by 2012. According to Estyn's 2011 Annual Report during the last two years, 'There has been a big increase in the number of courses available to learners for 14 to 16-year-olds. New vocational courses were offered to meet demand.' Furthermore, 'All schools met the non-statutory requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure for 2009–2010.' However, Estyn found that 'there was still too much variation in the range and number of courses available to learners. A minority of schools only just meet the minimum number of courses. There was also a wide variation in the ability of different areas to meet the requirements of the Measure. The areas that did well, such as Caerphilly and Merthyr Tydfil, had well-developed partnership arrangements. The most rural parts of Wales, such as Powys, found it difficult meet the requirements. In most cases, Welsh-medium schools found it difficult to provide vocational options through the medium of Welsh.'

59. In parallel with the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure the publication of the *Transformation Policy for Post-16 Education and Training* in 2008 invited providers of post-16 education and training to come forward with area plans for the transformation of post-16 education and training, improve learner choice and reduce duplication of learning. In 2009 *Transformation – Y Siwrnai* outlined the progress that had been made in each part of Wales on these plans. The document stated that while the Welsh Assembly Government welcomed the extent to which areas of Wales had responded to this policy it was clear that some local authority partnerships had been unable to develop a suitable case for change. The Welsh Assembly Government did not accept this position and stated that every community in Wales should benefit from new and better learning opportunities.

60. There are clear conclusions to be made from the evidence of this chapter. These conclusions and the recommendations that flow from them are embodied in one chapter at the end of this review. In this way they are kept together and their impact undiluted.




Chapter 5: Further education

Introduction

- 1.** As part of this section of our report the group consider it necessary and valuable to set a context for further education (FE) in order that the readership can clearly see the position in which FE finds itself in 2011 following almost 18 years of being a corporate status sector. Also included in this chapter is a section on standards in further education colleges, Adult and Community Learning and in work-based learning.
- 2.** Each further education college is legally a separate corporation; manages its own affairs; receives Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) funding directly; provides myriad of programmes for its community and business environment and is inspected by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Estyn. Some Further Education Institutions (FEIs) are now consistently outstanding in their WAG and work-based learning (WBL) funded work, with straight grade ones across the board and many are able to supplement their publicly funded work through other external income sources and use that income to create more improved learner services.
- 3.** However, there are many challenges in train for schools and colleges because Wales' FE colleges are required to work collaboratively with secondary schools to expand further their role in relation to young people aged 14–16. This commonly known as 14–16–19 initiatives/developments has been addressed in the 3–19 chapter. Major opportunities exist as well, to build on FE colleges' strengths in vocational education, to take advantage of their experience, their facilities and their workforce and continue to create an outstanding educational contribution to the learners, businesses and the economy of Wales.

The context

- 4.** Up until 1993 further education in Wales and indeed in the UK generally, was under the direct control of local education authorities or their equivalent in Northern Ireland or Scotland. There was usually a college for every authority and sometimes more than one dependent on the population and size of the LEA. Some further education colleges became part of larger higher education institutions and other specialist colleges were free-standing such as those delivering agriculture or horticulture. However, in Wales these specialist colleges have now become part of larger general further education colleges or higher education Institutions.



5. Often colleges were the poor relation to the rest of the LEA provision and were termed the 'Cinderella' or 'the neglected child.' The Foster Review of Further Education in England (2005) specifically used the term, 'neglected child' to describe not only further education under LEAs but also, until sufficient credibility was attached socially and politically to its major function in the UK educational system. Despite being the biggest educator of over-16s in Wales, the FE sector often struggles to attract public attention across Wales and yet is observed by many commentators to be a large and critical component in the 'engine of prosperity.'

What is further education?

6. Further education (FE) is post-compulsory education in addition to that received at secondary school post-16, traditionally known as sixth forms or Years 12 and 13. It may be at any level above compulsory education, from basic and work based training to National and Higher National Diploma or Foundation/Degree level. FE institutions (FEIs) are also required to work collaboratively with WAG funded secondary schools on the 14–19 WAG Learning Pathways Initiative. FE in Wales and in the United Kingdom includes education for people over 16, usually excluding universities although in some areas higher education participates in FE programmes. It is primarily taught in FE colleges and work-based learning environments and adult and community learning environments such as schools. This can include post-16 courses similar to those taught at schools and sub-degree courses similar to those taught at higher education (HE) colleges and at some universities.

7. In 1992 The Further and Higher Education Act made changes in the funding and administration of further education and higher education within the United Kingdom. The most visible result was to allow thirty-five polytechnics to become universities. In addition the Act created bodies to fund higher education in England — HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) and HEFCW (Higher Education Funding Council for Wales), and further education, FEFCE (Further Education Funding Council for England) and FEFCW (Further Education Funding Council for Wales) in Wales. This act creating national unitary funding councils, removed colleges of further education from local government control, and created quality assessment arrangements. This was a major change in the UK and Wales' colleges embraced the change with imagination and energy.

8. It was to be the beginning of a journey resulting in FE colleges taking on new governance arrangements; responsibility for their own finance, estates and human resource systems; the development of their own curriculum portfolios; the creation of business companies and/or commercial arms; creating outreach centres and franchise arrangements with other providers and many other new developments. Colleges truly became in charge of their own destiny.

9. The early years were marked by turbulence for some institutions across Wales and the UK in coming to terms with the new responsibilities and some were soon judged to be failing, insolvent and out of control. Where necessary recovery plans were put in place and Funding Councils with external auditors took a key place in the management of the troubled institutions. College mergers began to take place with the more capable institutions substantially 'taking over' the colleges which were not performing managerially satisfactorily; financially under-performing; not recruiting to their student targets and as a consequence becoming problematic for administrators at national level and requiring special recovery plan measures to be taken to overcome the acquired problems. In the mid to late 1990's Coleg Ceredigion and Coleg Gwent were two examples of this in Wales although neither of these two colleges was subject to a merger process during their recovery plan period.

10. After 1997 when Wales voted 'YES' to have its own Assembly, Measures were subsequently taken to influence the direction of FE Colleges with the abolishment of the FEFCW and the creation of the National Council for Education and Training for Wales which became known under the brand name of ELWa in 2001 (Education and Learning Wales) as a quango with responsibilities for post-16 education and training which included the work of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and FE colleges funded by FEFCW. A more detailed history of this process can be found in the publication *Unfinished Business: An Independent Case Study of ELWa* (University of Wales, Swansea, 2005).

11. This was yet another significant change for Wales's post 16 education arrangements which required careful administration and practice. The Assembly resolved that under the Learning and Skills Act of 2000 the National Council for Education and Training for Wales should be established from 1 April 2001, with clear aims; to bring coherence to a disjointed system for learners post-16; to do away with unnecessary competition between providers and the duplication of investment and work in partnership at local, regional or national levels to improve choice; to bring a level playing field to



funding for learners in sixth forms, FE and work-based settings. The thrust of ELWa was:


- better provision for skills
- parity of treatment for academic and vocational pathways
- higher standards of learning
- fewer dropouts/early leavers
- higher quality of provision
- more choice.

It meant breaking down the barriers to learning for individuals, communities, and business. It meant increasing the number, and the attainments, of learners in Wales.

12. ELWa's remit was to plan and fund post-16 learning (excluding higher education) in Wales including further education, publicly-funded work-based training, adult community learning and school sixth forms. NCETW/ELWa's main statutory responsibilities were to:

- 1) Secure the provision of facilities for post-16 education and training in Wales with the exception of higher education (covered by the other ELWa partner, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales – HEFCW).
- 2) Encourage young people and adults to participate in learning.
- 3) Encourage employers to participate in, and contribute to the costs of, post-16 education and training.

13. The Welsh Assembly Government treated ELWa as a single entity although it was not constituted as one. Initially the ELWa brand was used by both the NCETW and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), and both organisations shared a common executive with some joint staff co-located in Llanishen (NCETW also maintained the former TEC offices in Bedwas, Swansea, Newtown and St. Asaph). Following a review in 2002 the then Welsh Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane Davidson, decided that each Council should have a full-time dedicated Chief Executive and Director of Finance. Around the same time it also became apparent that there was no legal basis for the two Councils to jointly employ staff. Subsequently the brand name ELWa was retained solely by NCETW. However, ELWa was not without its problems. The common thread of concerns were weaknesses in the operation of important business systems – notably those bearing on contract, compliance, project, risk, and payment management.



14. ELWa was ultimately merged with the Welsh Assembly Government on 1 April 2006, along with the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board and ACCAC (Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru – Qualifications and Assessment Authority for Wales).

ELWa's functions along with those of ACCAC are now exercised by the Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS).


Further education Wales – an overview of the present arrangements

15. There are now (March 2011) 19 further education (FE) colleges and two FE institutions in Wales. The reader is invited to see the two maps following this chapter, one which visually articulates the geographical position of almost 70 FE campuses across Wales and two, the same map of FE campuses but additionally indicating the number of secondary schools (11–16 and 11–18) in each LA. It is interesting to recall that in 1984 there were a listed 42 further education colleges (Hansard July 1984). Merger has been a feature of further education for many years.

16. Colleges vary considerably in size, number and type of students and the range of programmes and services offered. The colleges have a national organisation named ColegauCymru and it is the national organisation representing all 19 further education (FE) colleges and the two FE institutions in Wales. Created in 1993 as an educational charity and a company limited by guarantee, ColegauCymru was known originally as 'Fforwm' until its renaming in 2009. It has become a collectively energetic and valued organisation showing exemplary commitment to improving education and training in Wales.

17. Through ColegauCymru/CollegesWales, colleges are represented on various committees, working parties and other groups that influence and shape policy in post-16 education and lifelong learning.

18. In the main, ColegauCymru/CollegesWales' senior staff serve as the representatives on these groups. Individual board members, principals, and senior staff from member colleges may also be nominated by the ColegauCymru/CollegesWales Board, Chief Executive, or by a ColegauCymru/CollegesWales network to represent colleges on particular areas of policy or committees.




19. The majority of colleges offer both academic and vocational programmes. Some have developed specialisms in particular vocational sectors, such as land-based/agriculture, marine engineering, food technology, aero engineering, art and design and catering. Some have developed a strong direction towards engaging particular sections of the population, for example, adults returning to learning, courses aimed at students from overseas, or bespoke training for businesses.

20. The FE sector is a key player in helping to deliver the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) Transformation Agenda (2009) and WAG's aims to widen participation, tackle social exclusion and stimulate economic regeneration. Indeed, in the 2009 Transformation Agenda document there are many initiatives involving further education colleges. Colleges in Wales offer 80 per cent of all post-16 qualifications and in 2009 provided learning experiences for 197,770 people in Wales. The sector is committed to the provision of high-quality education and training that is responsive to the needs of individuals, communities and business.

21. Whilst there are more 16 to 18-year-old learners in colleges than schools, the college 16–18 cohort makes up only 20 per cent of the student population in Welsh colleges as a whole. 80 per cent of students in colleges are adults over the age of 19 and many of the students study part-time. It is also important to remember that people enrol on courses, not necessarily a chronological age related course. For example a 17-year-old learner on a part-time programme can be alongside a 24-year-old in the same class.

Further education's contribution to the economy of Wales

22. A striking feature of many colleges in Wales is their ability to develop income other than the allocations they receive from the Welsh Assembly Government. Annual total income in 2008 per college ranged from £3.9 million to almost £50 million. Total income for all colleges in 2008/09 was £421.6 million. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) provided £332 million or 78.8 per cent of total income. Colleges therefore generated an additional £89 million through charging of fees, running full-cost courses and other services such as consultancy, overseas students, refectories, staff and student nurseries/child care and other enterprises.



23. Consequently, it is very important when considering future structures of education to carefully understand the significant economic impact that FE colleges have upon the economy of Wales. In the Welsh Economic Review 19.1 Spring 2007 it was stated that:

“in total, adding together the economic impact of the FEIs themselves, to that of FE students, the FEIs in Wales supported an estimated output of £552.8m, and just over 11,830 FTE jobs in 2003-04. For comparison purposes the contribution of FEIs can be compared to that of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Welsh economy.”

The most recent research obtained by the Task and Finish Group on the economic impact of the FE sector in Wales was commissioned by the former Welsh Development Agency prior to its merger with the Welsh Assembly Government in April 2006. It was carried out in 2005 by the Regeneration Institute of Cardiff University together with the Welsh Economy Research Unit of Cardiff Business School. (The Impact of Further Education Institutions on the Economy of Wales October 2006 Crown Copyright). The conclusion reached was ‘that £350m of FEI gross output in Wales supports an estimated £197m of additional economic activity. Each £1m of FEI output supports an additional £0.56m of output’. The report concluded ‘that FE in Wales must be viewed as a valuable partner by policymakers in economic development. The FE sector has an important role in developing the human capital base of the country and in breaking the low skills equilibrium that hindered Welsh economic prospects in 1980s and 1990s’.

FE colleges and their involvement with higher education

24. It must be noted that although HE was not in the Task and Finish remit the following data needs to be signalled for it begins the articulation, in part, of a minority of FE colleges’ aspirations and part of a vision of their future.

It is also interesting to observe that as university fees rise, some FE colleges hope to present themselves as serious lower-cost alternatives to gaining Foundation Degrees. This could lead to the ambition of becoming a ‘technical university’. The numbers of students franchised to a FE college or directly funded by HEFCW and studying for a higher education qualification totalled 11,205 in 2009–10 and is broken down as follows:

1. Number of full-time students in further education colleges directly funded by HEFCW – 672.
2. Number of students in part-time mode directly funded by HEFCW – 523.
3. Number of part-time students franchised to FE colleges in Wales and colleges/institutions in England from Welsh HEIs – 7,000.
4. Number of full-time students franchised to FE colleges in Wales and colleges/institutions in England from Welsh HEIs – 3,010.

Responses against points 1 and 2 were provided by HEFCW and are derived from the 2009/10 HEFCW end of year monitoring survey.

Responses against points 3 and 4 were provided by the WAG Statistical Directorate and show the number of full and part time students who were registered at Welsh HEIs and franchised out to FEIs (including students franchised to FEIs outside Wales). These figures relate to 2009/10.

General characteristics of further education Colleges in Wales

25. As an introduction to this section we have included the Assembly allocations to colleges over the last four years to demonstrate that the different allocations are awarded on size and individual college performance. Alongside some of the colleges are merger notes. Also included as a separate table are the college allocations for 2011-2012 but these do not embrace the work-based learning (WBL) contract value as the tendering process for this activity is still taking place as this report is being written.

Name of FE institution	Allocation 2007–8	Allocation 2008–9	Allocation 2009–10	Allocation 2010–11
Barry College – to merge with Glan Hafren in 2012	£10,192,645	£10,693,842	£10,693,842	£12,049,953
Bridgend College (already merged with Pencoed)	£15,492,523	£15,492,523	£15,536,138	£17,128,811
Coleg Sir Gâr	£16,279,086	£16,279,086	£16,279,086	£16,909,425
Coleg Ceredigion	£4,009,306	£3,954,709	£4,034,148	£4,102,427

Name of FE institution	Allocation 2007–8	Allocation 2008–9	Allocation 2009–10	Allocation 2010–11
Deeside College – now merged with Welsh College of Horticulture and Llysfasi College	£13,387,798	£13,253,920	£13,752,572	£18,339,517
Coleg Glan Hafren – to merge with Barry College	£15,458,603	£15,458,603	£16,857,154	£18,150,681
Gorseinon College – now merged with Swansea College to form Gower College	£8,298,124	£9,041,213	£9,128,349	£9,190,403
Coleg Gwent – created from 5 colleges prior to 1993 – Usk, Newport, Cross Keys, Ebbw Vale and Pontypool Colleges	£38,274,536	£38,274,536	£38,274,536	£40,840,932
Coleg Llandrillo – now merged with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor	£19,507,652	£20,660,379	£21,628,274	£23,580,262
Coleg Llysfasi – now merged with Deeside College	£2,923,798	£2,987,090	£2,987,090	£2,991,067
Coleg Meirion Dwyfor – now merged with Coleg Llandrillo	£6,378,085	£6,314,304	£6,314,304	£6,777,872
Merthyr Tydfil College – part of the University of Glamorgan	£5,583,969	£5,679,453	£6,016,100	£6,119,158
Pembrokeshire College	£11,444,794	£11,296,468	£11,296,468	£11,632,335
Coleg Morgannwg – includes what was Rhondda College Pontypridd and Aberdare College	£16,764,485	£15,850,011	£15,850,011	£16,309,332
Coleg Powys	£7,395,012	£8,170,752	£8,094,244	£8,013,302
St David's Catholic College*	£4,460,761	£4,416,153	£5,064,910	£5,209,855
Swansea College – now merged with Gorseinon to form Gower College	£16,898,914	£17,281,750	£16,948,779	£17,544,399

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Name of FE institution	Allocation 2007–8	Allocation 2008–9	Allocation 2009–10	Allocation 2010–11
Welsh College of Horticulture – merged with Deeside College 2009	£3,764,014	£3,726,374	£3,587,439	£0
Yale College	£17,238,075	£17,238,075	£17,238,075	£18,406,856
Ystrad Mynach College	£11,786,424	£12,940,617	£12,940,617	£14,563,304
WEA South – plans to merge with Coleg Harlech/WEA North August 2012	£2,110,444	£2,216,595	£2,272,675	£2,249,948
YMCA**	£506,260	£666,486	£749,006	£904,196
Coleg Menai – created from the merger of Coleg Gwynedd and with Coleg Pencraig	£12,341,272	£12,646,086	£12,982,312	£14,089,908
Neath Port Talbot College – created from the merger of Afan College and Neath College	£19,169,437	£19,169,437	£19,169,437	£19,574,492
Coleg Harlech/WEA (North)*** – merged 2001 and plans to merge with WEA South August 2012	£2,106,523	£2,150,760	£2,256,439	£2,233,875
Total	£281,772,540	£285,859,222	£289,952,004	£306,912,311

Allocations to FE institutions 2007–2011


- * St David's enjoys a unique position in educational terms as it's the only Catholic sixth form college in Wales. It was founded by the Archdiocese of Cardiff to be a place where faith is respected and encouraged.
- ** YMCA Wales Community College is a further education institution dedicated to providing community-based learning opportunities for people in Wales wishing to re-engage with education, in particular those who do not wish to follow traditional education routes. Rather than using a central location, courses are held at venues in the community.
- *** Coleg Harlech Workers' Educational Association (North Wales) was formed on 1 August 2001 by the merger of two of Wales' oldest adult education bodies. The Workers' Educational Association (North Wales) established in 1925 as the North Wales District of the Workers' Educational Association. Coleg Harlech WEA (N) is a 'designated institution', rather than an incorporated FE college, established under the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992. This means that the governing instruments and articles differ slightly from general further education or specialist colleges and some regulations which are mandatory for colleges do not apply to designated institutions; however the tenets underpinning best practice apply equally to all. The merged Association has continued the common longstanding tradition of liberal arts adult education to enable adults to develop their capacity to learn and fulfil their potential, but has also continued to enlarge this by developing vocational education and training, including providing opportunities for socially and educationally disadvantaged adults both in residence at Harlech and in communities and workplaces across North and Mid Wales. It has continuing discussions to merge with WEA South in 2012.

26. Allowing for other sources of grant from the Welsh Assembly Government and other income sources other than state funding the total income in 2008/09 was £421.6 million. The Welsh Assembly Government provided £332 million or 78.8 per cent of total income.

Income above and beyond the Welsh Assembly Government allocation is an essential component of colleges' business and is derived from a range of sources and in the larger FEIs many have Business Development Units or a form of commercial services unit which seeks contracts with business and industry.

27. For the year 2011–2012 the following Welsh Assembly Government allocations to FE institutions are as follows but do not include WBL funding as noted above because of the present tendering process which applies to colleges and to other training providers.

Institution name	2011/2012 total allocation (£)
Barry College	11,880,995
Bridgend College	16,887,800
Coleg Sir Gâr	16,663,567
Coleg Ceredigion	3,955,947
Deeside College	21,020,596
Coleg Glan Hafren	17,884,383
Coleg Gwent	40,229,038
Coleg Llandrillo	30,157,541
Merthyr Tydfil College	6,605,828
Pembrokeshire College	11,461,146
Coleg Morgannwg	16,073,717
Coleg Powys	7,980,102
St David's Catholic College	5,126,579
Gower College Swansea	26,331,364
Yale College	18,130,661
Ystrad Mynach College	14,356,995
WEA South	2,219,982
YMCA	890,948
Coleg Menai	13,883,509
Neath Port Talbot College	19,279,249
Coleg Harlech/WEA (North)	2,203,908
Total	303,223,855



28. In the context of funding it is important to note that further education has no upper age limit but in terms of mainstream funding from the Welsh Assembly Government for a learner it begins at 16 years of age. There are funding aspects to combined provision with schools on the 14-16-19 continuum but these are via a specific grant not mainstream funding.


29. Colleges are funded from the Welsh Assembly Government via DCELLS through an annual and historically based Provision Development Plan (PDP) and this is broken down into funded vocational and education training areas. It is presently the basis for a majority of the education and training provision provided by an institution. It is perceived as unsatisfactory as it is not fundamentally a planning instrument.

Qualifications and Learner Data recording in further education

30. In terms of qualification and levels of qualifications there is clear evidence from our visits to FELs of data confusion about the uses made of LLWR (Lifelong Learning Wales Record) which records colleges activities. Although learner focus is always emphasised by colleges and other training providers it was also pointed out that FE qualifications were over-tied to the funding mechanism. Indeed, our fact finding visits to colleges led us to conclude that the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) was perceived to be predominantly a funding mechanism and not a planning system. Many college Principals regretted that DCELLS had abandoned the requirement of colleges to submit strategic plans to DCELLS even though many, if not all, submitted a plan to their governing corporations. As a consequence there was no perceived formal mechanism of colleges informing DCELLS of their intentions and as a result economic or educational training developments were sometimes happening but not necessarily noticed by DCELLS at a central or regional level.

Colleges responding to employers

31. Many colleges respond positively and quickly to employers but this cannot always be tied systematically to the Provision Development Plan (PDP) because of the 'historical basis and reverse looking procedure' of PDPs. Many exciting and thriving training opportunities can be missed in this process which in many ways underpin the growth and change in the economies and well being of geographical areas.



32. Large institutions have created commercial arms to their portfolio of operations and many earn substantial amounts of income in this way and also use the income to sustain and develop the other learner and business services of their college. The strength of these commercial operations cannot be understated because without this income opportunity many functions of the larger college would decline and possibly become moribund.

Quality of DCELLS staff

33. The quality and capability of DCELLS staff in understanding present day FE was often questioned in our deliberations with colleges and DCELLS staff understanding of what, and sometimes why, a modern college does or would wish to do in serving its communities was lacking. The quality of many staff was seen to be too low for the job and as one college leader put it, 'the further one is from DCELLS the better we perform'.

Governance and accountability

34. In terms of governance and accountability it is evident that college accountability is high. The college is accountable to its Corporation Board which is made up of business, community, local authority elected members, staff and students. In addition all colleges have robust internal and external auditing mechanisms. Moreover, the larger and merged institutions often recruiting over large geographical regions or indeed operating nationally in some cases, have developed and continue to develop local college/site 'councils' for improved community accountability. Colleges have developed self regulation procedures at governance level in addition to this feature of community accountability.




FE colleges and rural Wales

35. Rurality is a serious issue for Wales and particularly in terms of how opportunities present themselves to the local community. Across Wales as a whole, colleges have developed literally hundreds of satellite/outreach centres for both adult and community programmes. It is not uncommon in urban and rural areas to see 30–40 satellite centres of delivery per college delivering to business on site or adult and community education in schools. However, for smaller colleges presenting and delivering a wide vocational provision in small rural areas often in reality means that learners have to travel to avail themselves of a main college campus to train in a particular vocational/subject area. The expensive capital requirements of vocational areas such as engineering and construction require frequent updating and therefore have a regular significant capital cost and small colleges are unable to support this updating as regularly as larger cost effective institutions do. In this context it is necessary to say that colleges will need to look more at regional provision and as a consequence more mergers will become a feature of operation. This process of merger will enable the merged and larger institutions to present in partnership with schools a more sustainable 14–19 Learning Pathways curriculum and meet the criteria for the 30 option choice which is presently not being met by some schools with small sixth forms. A natural consequence of this dilemma of how to provide increased choice of learning opportunities is to consider regional consortia solutions for Wales. The evidence gathered over the many visits to colleges shows that many learners willingly travel well over 1–1/2 hours to pursue they chosen programme and often in areas with very poorly developed road/access systems.

Mergers of colleges

36. Mergers of colleges can often be seen as monopolies in post-16 provision and a possible neglect of local accountability. It must be stressed that a monopoly in provision and loss of local accountability is not necessarily an automatic consequence as some would envisage. Given the appropriate and strong governance systems combined with local 'college councils' large institutions become even more accountable to communities and with the economies of scale of larger staffing numbers and a stronger vocational teaching base with modern facilities, opportunities become increased for all learners no matter what their age. The management of the large institutions is also being addressed and local colleges after merger are/will be placing leaders whose main primary function we are informed will address 'teaching and learning'. The Human Resource, Estates,



Finance, IT and other business functions is addressed centrally relieving the teaching and learning director, or whatever role designation is used, of the burden of administration. Again, not only will teaching and learning issues be the central focus and should be consequently reflected in improved standards but the costs of the administration of the colleges that were merged will be lessened releasing money to the front line.

Colleges – culture and ethos

37. The culture and ethos of colleges is clearly important and is often described as a combination of some and more of the issues described in this chapter. Culture derives its position from many features including funding; governance; sometimes unfocussed provision; lack of guidance nationally; the quality of planning mechanisms; quality of teaching and learner outcomes and consequent higher/lower Estyn grades; contracts of employment; sometimes planning that is overly bureaucratic in its demands and in some institutions an unclear sense of purpose.

38. Despite the Welsh FE sector's importance to economic, social and individual goals, it remains a sector that is publicly poorly defined and poorly understood. Its early 'isolation' and paradoxically its excellent characteristics could both be perceived as consequences of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. The Act allowed corporations with their leaders to create the dynamism that is now observed across Wales. Some of our interviewees have said that FE has not had the opportunity to display equally its contribution to other educational sectors. One of our interviewees characterised FE as the 'everything else' sector because of its enormous but positive breadth of provision, ranging from basic skills to Foundation degrees.

39. There also appears to be confusion outside the FE sector about what is delivered and by whom and who pays for it. In part this is due to such a vast curriculum portfolio – it was maintained at the time of the Foster Review in England that there were over 20,000 programmes associated with FE. Some secondary schools outside the FE sector do refer to it as the 'local Tech', 'Further Education' or FE or in some of the anecdotal evidence collected as 'the place to go when you have not gained 5 GCSEs or none at all.' In reality, FE in Wales is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, employers and individuals, and providers include: large and smaller general FE Colleges, a Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, vocational specialist sites within FE colleges, part-tertiary colleges, and other learning providers from the private, voluntary and community sectors. It is maintained throughout this group's work that the Welsh Assembly




Government should work to inform the public about the range of provision and providers in the post-16 sector, and to publicise its importance to business about its place in the achievement of a dynamic Welsh economy with high skilled, well-rewarded employees.

40. This suggests that there needs to be a clear decision and statement about the purpose of FE colleges within the post-14 and post-16 sectors together with the right institutional and organisational model to deliver the Transformation Agenda. Colleges are primarily publicly funded and following the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, when FE colleges were established as institutions independent of the LEA and required to be entrepreneurial as well as linked to the local community, it has been acknowledged by some interviewees that there has been over the years in some colleges 'mission drift or creep'. Other colleges have secured their positions with strong and dynamic leadership and governance. The general interpretation of many institutions' missions and values is to serve the college students well and have a range of high-quality learning opportunities. However, this type of statement, of high-quality learning opportunities, is not always consistently mirrored by the comments and grade outcomes of Estyn inspections nor consistently reflected well in the Tribal benchmarking* work referred to later in this chapter. There is a wide range in success terms within the FE sector with some FE colleges maximising their very high inspection grades and community value but some areas that have been inspected have lower and also do not perform as well as the benchmarks of the sector*.

*www.tribalbenchmarking.co.uk/wales/Home.aspx

The FE estate asset base

41. Many of the medium to larger FE colleges in Wales have a substantial physical asset base. This has been developed through Welsh Assembly Government capital funding but some colleges have supplemented Welsh Assembly Government capital resources with carefully addressed bank loan resources and/or cash reserves that consequently give them a significant advantage over other colleges which are financially unable to take a loan repayment structure because of size and consequently less financial resources. Providing best value for money in using these premises would in part be, to ensure that publicly funded premises secured with, or not, the assistance of bank loans, are available for publicly funded curricula and learners via a regional consortia mechanism, and regardless of who/what is the delivery body. This would be easier to arrange within a single large institution than between autonomous colleges. The former—single and larger institution – could attract substantial capital



resources, which would be better deployed in broader programmes of modernisation and improvement for all members of a regional consortium and not duplicate expensive vocational provision in smaller colleges or secondary schools.

The college focus

42. Colleges need to deal with real externally assessed performance evidence, address the economic concerns of their areas, have more labour market intelligence, improved transitional college/school post-16 planning data and synchronised timetabling wherever possible on the 14-16-19 continuum. It must be underlined that this latter requirement is one which demands a permanent commitment from heads of secondary schools not a temporary partnership followed by a 'we can now do it ourselves without the college.'


43. Some colleges 'chase' the funding mechanism – which is in part understandable, as the NPFS has significant and well observed disadvantages – more than the purpose of what could be done with their resource and this is something which needs to be addressed not only by themselves but in partnership with other post-16 providers – schools, LAs, other training providers in the private sector, businesses, Local Service Boards, health authorities, social service provision. All have training needs and the summary of those needs is reflected consequently – or should be in part by a defined FE purpose. The growing complexity of needs is often the cause of some confusion of purpose at college level. It is clear that colleges, independent of size cannot deliver everything and especially when funding streams are squeezed. FE does not always want to be defined in terms of the skills agenda for it is also the second chance opportunity at 16, 17, 18 and post-19 and the route for the many who are disadvantaged.

14–19 initiatives

44. The 14–19 initiative has already been elaborated in the 3–19 chapter. Some of the examples of good practice quoted in the appendices/website associated with this work are exceptional and merit further examination by other providers.

Literacy and numeracy

45. Literacy and numeracy is a clear concern for colleges in Wales as it is in schools. It is evident that the PISA 2010 results are similarly reflected in the colleges' assessment of literacy and numeracy. Figures released by ColegauCymru reveal a growing concern amongst colleges that they have to contend with the consequences of poor




outcomes in schools. The latest report as of November 2010 from colleges was that from a cohort of 37,277 learners, 43.3 per cent had literacy levels and 48.5 per cent had numeracy levels below that of level It is therefore reasonable to assume that colleges have to expend considerable attention, time and money to this growing problem with a public resource that is reducing. This expenditure would be unnecessary if literacy and numeracy levels were given greater and immediate attention at primary and secondary school level. Indeed, the literacy concern along with the numeracy is consequently becoming a larger problem as young people/students move along the education continuum.

General partnership working

46. It is strongly evidenced in our visits to, and responses from, many colleges that the further education sector has and continues to respond positively to the Welsh Assembly Government's transformation agenda. Indeed, at the time of writing some further education institutions had recently merged, or were in the process of merging or considering merging with other further education institutions and we believe this trend must continue.

47. Many have established stronger links with higher education institutions. The purposes of partnering with HE institutions via what has been termed in South West Wales as Dual Sector partnership initiatives, have many positive benefits and provide pathways to higher education on a local/regional basis and are delivered on a full-time and part-time basis enabling learners to be simultaneously employed whilst also studying for a higher education qualification. The work of Coleg Sir Gâr and others in this area of activity is significant and warrants wider attention.

48. Similarly, another example of school/college partnerships in South West Wales is that 11–18 schools, Governors, headteachers and the Coleg Sir Gâr Principal and Camarthenshire Local Authority have taken 14–19 Joint Governance forward positively and as a consequence the portfolio of 14–19 programmes now extends to over many hundreds of learners. Although this Joint Governance is still in its early days there is considerable success noted in improving joint working arrangements for the advantage of young people. This is obviously an important step on a journey for more integrated 14–19 planning and delivery within a regional consortium mechanism.



49. Such a step is also reflected in the Regional Learning Partnership for South West Wales (RLP) which was first mooted in September 2007 and was led by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's Director of Education and brought together a host of partners from local government, further education, higher education, the third sector and work-based learning providers. The idea of a broad based partnership cutting across geographical and sector boundaries in the area of education, lifelong learning and skills was broadly welcomed. The partners agreed a vision, a mission statement and key objectives for collaborative working in south west Wales with a focus on the learner, skills and employment.

50. The RLP complements the 'SWAMWAC' (South West and Mid Wales Consortium) regional education consortium of Local Authority Education Directorates across the region which has been engaged in regional working for several years. RLP partners engage with 'SWAMWAC' activities on 14–19 delivery in the region. The RLP builds on this foundation by embracing regeneration with a focus on skills and employment, as well as creating a broader partnership of public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders, with an interest in education and regeneration. It is this working together for a common aim that is its success.

51. There are indeed many good and excellent examples of partnership working across Wales in 14–19 education with colleges, schools, LAs, WBL providers all creating improved learning opportunities for learners. At Coleg Ceredigion the college has moved from a college delivery basis for some of its construction provision, albeit small, to an external delivery (peripatetic) model at four secondary schools. Other examples can be seen in Llandrillo College's Rhyl Sixth, the Flintshire/Deeside College 14–19 Learning Core Centre, the Coleg Menai Môn and Arfon partnerships which along with other examples are enclosed as appendices/website examples of good practice.

52. The involvement of the FE sector in networks of professional practice, often facilitated by DCELLS and ColegauCymru, is a particular strength. The sector has worked well to develop joint approaches to benchmarking and to develop the skills of college staff and governors in monitoring standards and quality.



Quality and standards achieved by the FE sector as measured by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales – Estyn

53. This section deals with the quality and standards achieved in the FE sector as informed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report for 2009–2010 published by Estyn in January 2011 and secondly an Estyn thematic report entitled *The quality of new build in Further Education and its impact on learners* (Estyn in June 2010).

54. It is in four subsections:

1. How Estyn assessed the performance and standards in further education in the 2004–2010 inspection cycle?
2. Summary of performance and standards in further education.
3. Assessment of leadership and management of quality in further education.
4. The Colleges' Estate and its effects on learner outcomes.

There were 25 further education institutions at the start of the Estyn inspection cycle in 2004. By the end of the cycle, this had reduced to 22 as a consequence of mergers. More mergers are now being examined by FE colleges.

55. StatsWales reports that in 2008–2009, 192,770 people were enrolled as learners at further education institutions. This was 6.7 per cent fewer than in 2007–2008. Overall learner numbers in further education institutions decreased by 16 per cent between December 2002 and December 2008. Between December 2002 and December 2008, full-time further education learner numbers grew by 8 per cent and part-time numbers fell by 23 per cent over the same period, the number of further education learners aged 18 and under, grew by 12 per cent and the number aged 19 and over fell by 24 per cent. During this period colleges gave priority to different client groups and many rationalised their provision to create improved efficiencies which in part can explain the fall in learner numbers.

1. How Estyn assessed the performance and standards in further education in the 2004–2010 inspection cycle?

56. In assessing the performance and standards of further education, Estyn used the 7 Key Questions (KQs) in the 2004–2010 cycle of inspections to inform evidence on standards in further education and indeed this was common to all educational institutions. The KQs are attached as Appendix 9.

57. By examining the profile of the grades achieved by FEIs/colleges that were inspected during the inspection cycle of 2004–2010 the Estyn evidence is clear. There is room for improvement in areas of work of a number of institutions but overall, as Estyn reports, the movement is towards one of improved standards and the new inspection cycle with its Common Inspection Framework will inevitably bring about a more informed assessment across all post-16 providers, schools, work-based learning and FEIs. All grades awarded for the learning areas inspected in colleges can be seen on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk).

2. Summary of performance and standards in further education institutions

58. Estyn reports in the 2011 Annual Report that:

“Standards in further education institutions have improved over the last six years. They are now much higher than they were in 2004 when they were good or very good in 52% of the learning areas we inspected. By July 2010, this figure of good to very good had increased to just over 85%.”

This rise of some 33 per cent is a significant accomplishment but improvement still remains to be done when the Tribal Benchmarking data is examined. A link to the Tribal Benchmarking Data, for readers to see in greater detail how each college performs by sector/subject area, can be found on our web page (see Chapter 1: Introduction).


59. Overall Estyn summarises the grade provision by saying:

“In further education institutions between 2004 and 2010, we awarded grades 1 and 2 to the standards learners achieved in 91% of the learning areas we inspected. We awarded grade 3 and above to the standards learners achieved in 98% of the learning areas we inspected. This exceeded the Welsh Assembly Government’s targets for further education programmes to be good or better in 65% of provision and to be grade 3 or better in 95% of provision by 2010.”

3. Assessment of leadership and management of quality in further education

60. Estyn reports that:

“Many aspects of leadership and management have improved over the past six years. Colleges have continued to reduce management costs and distributed leadership roles far more widely across middle managers. Overall, this has led to improved communication and better implementation of



college priorities throughout the organisations. Business planning by middle managers has also improved as they have become more responsible for controlling the costs associated with the delivery of learning programmes."

61. It was clear to the Task and Finish Group following visits to many colleges that further education institutions have developed performance management processes well. Colleges introduced a nationally-agreed system for performance management and review (PMAR) in April 2006. The system has improved professional development for staff overall which is also recorded by Estyn in their report. Estyn comments, 'Overall, leaders, managers and governors have taken a more active and robust approach to underperformance than in the past'.

62. Furthermore, Estyn elaborates by saying:

"The colleges inspected had good systems for managing and improving the quality of their provision. Over the course of the cycle, we awarded good or outstanding grades for managing quality to about two-thirds of providers. Further education institutions have also made increasingly good use of benchmarking data (see Tribal web link) on learner outcomes to monitor their own performance against the rest of the sector. Most colleges have improved their management information systems since the start of the cycle. Despite this, over the cycle there were more shortcomings in the quality of self-evaluation than in any other key question. In the third of colleges where there were significant weaknesses, this was often because the quality assurance systems had not picked up and addressed weak areas of provision. It was also because the overall approach to the management of quality lacked challenge and was not thorough enough."

63. Overall, Estyn's assessment is real and penetrating. We have extremely well performing colleges with active quality systems which are regularly reviewed. The colleges report to their governing bodies (Corporation Boards) systematically and address shortcomings. But we also see considerable room for some colleges to persevere with quality improvement and systematically examine and improve the achievements of their learners. We support and encourage continual examination of the implications of Estyn reports as well as internal systems on self-evaluation.

4. The Colleges' Estate and its effects on learner outcomes

64. Further education colleges and the Welsh Assembly Government have worked well together to improve accommodation and facilities. They have made good use of funds to build new accommodation and facilities. Between 2006 and 2009, Estyn reports that colleges spent nearly £74 million on new buildings. The Welsh Assembly Government provided just over a half of this finance directly.

65. In the colleges visited by Estyn during the last inspection cycle new buildings and facilities have resulted in an improvement in learners' results and attendance, and reduced a decline in new learners signing up for courses. Estyn reports that:

"The average improvement in learners' results for the learning areas that have had new buildings and facilities is better than the improvement within the college as a whole. Colleges that have built new accommodation and facilities have better average improvement in learner results than the average for all Welsh colleges."

66. This process of positively using capital and enhancing the public capital with bank loans/cash reserves, often of a large substantial nature, has engendered a positive impact on staff, learners and quality. New accommodation often helps improve links with a wide range of local groups. This assists colleges to work better with schools and helps pupils to progress to vocational courses at colleges. New buildings and facilities often improve the good relationships colleges have with employers. They help colleges increase the number of employers they work with and improve the level of sponsorship they receive.

67. Estyn observes that:

"Colleges now take a longer strategic view of how they will develop their buildings and land than in the previous cycle. They have begun to work better with partners, such as local authorities, to develop their estates for a wider range of learners, including those aged 14–19. In general, further education institutions have used their resources efficiently and offer good value for money including the 14–19 cohort. This investment is seen as a positive contribution to improve both education and training and to local community enhancement."

For further evidence on this aspect readers are asked to examine the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk).



Standards in adult and community learning

68. It should also be reported that there are also many adult and community learning (ACL) Partnerships in every local authority in Wales and access to their Estyn grades as well as those of colleges and work-based learning can also be found on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk).

69. Adult and community learning partnerships involve a range of providers within local authority areas that include further education institutions, the local authority itself, Welsh language centres, the Workers Educational Association, the County Voluntary Council and local voluntary organisations. In addition, there is the provision of the Workers Educational Association South Wales, Coleg Harlech Workers Educational Association North Wales and the YMCA Community College Cymru.

70. The adult community-based learning inspection areas include:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE)
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Welsh for Adults
- Adult Learning
- Community Development.

71. Estyn reports that standards in adult community learning were as follows.

Inspection grades awarded to Key Question 1 (standards achieved by learners), 2004–2010:

- 17 per cent were awarded Grade 1
- 64 per cent were awarded Grade 2
- 16 per cent were awarded Grade 3
- 3 per cent Grade 4.

72. Estyn comments overall as follows:

“A few partnerships worked well to improve quality. Partners made sure that they shared good practice and compared the standards of their work. As a result, the partnership improved the range of courses available for learners and opportunities for them to progress to further learning. Nearly all managers agreed targets for the work their staff undertook. However, many of these targets did not have enough detail and managers did not monitor progress enough.

73. Around half of the partnerships had shortcomings in their quality assurance arrangements. There were not enough systems to identify local learning needs. Partnerships often did not have enough clear targets or performance indicators to monitor quality."

Work-based learning standards

74. It is important to remember that work-based learning (WBL) is a large feature of post-16 training in Wales and is delivered by a wide range of organisations sometimes as a partnership and sometimes as individual organisations. The overall figure for publicly funded WBL is circa £120 million and is tendered for via DECLLS and there is strong evidence from the responses we have had, that partnership working in this area is becoming a stronger and necessary feature in Wales.

75. Estyn reports that:

"At the beginning of 2004 there were approximately 115 work-based learning providers. This had reduced to 87 by the end of 2010. In 2008–2009, 56,550 learners undertook work-based learning programmes at further education institutions and other training providers, 1.7% fewer than in 2007–2008. By 2008–2009 almost 30% of work-based learning programme enrolments were in further education institutions while 71% were with other training providers but they – other training providers – also make significant and positive use of college based vocational facilities."

76. Estyn reports that:

"In work-based learning between 2004 and 2010, we awarded grades 1 and 2 to the standards learners achieved in 62% of the learning areas we inspected. We awarded grade 3 and above to the standards learners achieved in 86% of the learning areas we inspected. This exceeded the Welsh Assembly Government's targets for training programmes to be good or better in 40% of provision and to be grade 3 or better in 85% of provision by 2010."

77. The standards achieved and qualifications attained by work-based learners' success in attaining full qualification frameworks have improved year on year. The latest figures, from the Welsh Assembly Government, StatsWales (2010) showed a 75 per cent success rate for full framework attainment across all providers. This was a significant improvement on success rates from 2004 when only a third of learners completed Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and



only a quarter completed their Modern Apprenticeship programmes. Successes for learners in work-based learning over the course of this inspection cycle have improved significantly. However, there is also the need in this area of education and training to critically address standards and as with general FE improvement needs to be seen year on year. A summative position on work-based learning over the inspection cycle 2004-2010 is to be seen on the Estyn website in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report for 2009–2010.


78. WBL providers are increasingly collaborating on partnership tendering to DCELLS often led by a large FE college working with other training providers. The outcome of these tenders for 2011 is not yet known at the time of writing this report but it is clear that a greater simplification of post-16 opportunities will be addressed if such collaborative tenders are successful. In a number of areas across Wales this collaboration has realised itself with college and other training provider merging and is evidenced in the WBL provision at Coleg Menai, Coleg Llandrillo, Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire to name only few.

79. Provision in work-based learning is an essential component equally for the work of large, medium size employers and small businesses. Indeed, without this aspect of training many SMEs would not have the skill wherewithal for training and business continuation.

Welsh-medium education in colleges

80. The representative organisation for colleges in Wales, ColegauCymru/CollegesWales on the 24 April 2010 welcomed the publication of the Welsh Assembly Government's first ever strategy for Welsh-medium education and looks positively in working with the Welsh Assembly Government and other partners to put the accompanying Action Plan into practice. Wales' further education colleges, through ColegauCymru, agreed a Strategy on Bilingualism in FE in January 2010, with the aim of increasing the vocational study options available to post-16 learners through the medium of Welsh. Their Chief Executive says that:

“Further education colleges have already started the task of asking hard questions of themselves in order to be in a position to deliver a significant jump in the level of Welsh-medium provision, rather than the incremental steps that they have successfully managed over recent years.”



Clearly there is an all Wales FE determinism to develop and present a more comprehensive post-16 curriculum building on the strengths and pioneering core developmental work of Coleg Meirion Dwyfor – now a part of Llandrillo College. This has been reinforced by the Minister's latest announcement in February 2011 that four colleges will receive £52,000 per annum for the next three academic years to increase the number of modules and courses available to learners through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, and to create opportunities for learners to maintain and develop their Welsh language skills through a range of informal activities.

81. ColegauCymru embraces the challenge by saying that:

“colleges must work with a range of partners, including the WAG, to help bring about the changes needed. The publication of the all-encompassing all-age Strategy and Action Plan for Welsh-Medium Education by the WAG will help ensure that the different types of education providers and all the stakeholder organisations will all work to the same Strategy to deliver for learners in Wales.”

As ColegauCymru have said:

“It would appear that schools, colleges, universities, awarding bodies, have all ploughed their own furrows for too long. There hasn't been a national strategic direction that all providers could work towards. There hasn't been a national map of Welsh-medium provision that parents, learners and employers could navigate.”

It is recognised therefore that consortia provision can play a major part in the further development of Welsh-medium provision and consequently share and promulgate the development in a much wider educational context by embracing Foundation to further and higher education. A consortia based system would be able to effectively interface with a network of Welsh language centres and the Welsh-medium schools who have a good geographical spread.

The way forward for further education is to collaboratively address a Wales structured solution to learning

82. In our work we have visited many FE institutions (FEIs) in Wales, received many responses and have positively perceived an appetite and more strongly the requirement for necessary change. Incorporation ideals of 18 years ago in 1993 have been built



into a system that has become dynamic, resolute in progress and qualitatively different in many ways from the Learning and Skills Agency and its successor agencies models of England in terms of funding, partnership modelling and guidance.


83. However, the time has arrived for Wales to have a delivery solution for itself to address the pluralistic nature of a twenty-first century Wales and to restore confidence and drive up standards in many parts of the educational system. It needs a model that encompasses all age groups and a model that puts the teaching and learning of individuals and the improvement of the outcomes and standards for those individuals consistently at the top of the agenda. Our evidence shows that colleges want and need to play their part in this model for they have a distinct and rich partnership contribution to make. Equally, Wales needs a solution not only based on driving high standards but also having a range of public and other providers playing a critical role in achieving Wales' economic and social aspirations. This is a challenge and a necessary one to prevent poor and under-performance across all sectors.

84. Colleges and work-based learning leaders must maintain the improving record on standards and performance that was observed in the last cycle of Estyn inspections and they realise that this is, in part, obtainable when working in financially healthy, well understood and professionally articulated partnerships which are transparent to learners and provide regional wide choices of curriculum opportunities.

85. The dynamic general further education college has retained its strength and has always in the last 18 years reviewed and re-examined the scope of its training and curriculum portfolio during demographic and economic down-swings and up-swings. Many have emerged as successful after the decline of manufacturing, the collapse of day-release apprenticeships in the 1990s and the re-emergence of work-based learning/apprenticeships, the rise of service industries, and the coming of new technologies.

86. It is reflected in the Welsh Assembly Government guidance and policy documents that the purpose of the FE sector is to create public value, where this means contributing to economic skill improvement, economic prosperity and social cohesion, and individual value. This needs publicly reiterating.

87. FE colleges are public service organisations in the education/skills sector with duties beyond simply being financially viable (but this should remain so) and a core purpose of creating




public and individual value. This needs to be reflected in Governance guidelines that give colleges and secondary schools a duty of working together and with other partners to meet local and regional consortia priorities and specifically to evaluate the impact the FEIs have on the communities they provide to and for. FE needs to show its talent, its capacity and capability to demonstrate on a larger public canvas what it can and does do for post-14 and post-16 learners in collaboration with educational providers. We consider that a regional consortia model is the way forward.

88. Wales through its LAs is already developing a regional consortia approach to the delivery of educational services and issues need to be addressed by all educational organisations through such questions as: What role do partnerships and collaboration play in the support of learners? What information is required to support and impact itself on institutional improvement? What impact will regional consortia have upon existing FE colleges, secondary schools, primary schools and the administration of education services?

89. It should also be ensured, in any regional consortium/network arrangement, that FE college targets are not required to solely focus on qualifications to the detriment of other tailor made programmes/courses that may significantly increase public and individual and business value, but not necessarily fit within a qualification. Clearly bespoke/tailor made commercial programmes for industry and business will feature high in this category and will be even more necessary in times of financial stringency.

90. Some current financial arrangements funded by the Welsh Assembly Government are seen to discourage flexibility. For example, short-term funding streams lead to anxiety and instability for some providers, and have wider impacts on innovation, capacity building and on responsiveness to student learner need or employer need. The current NPFS system falls short not only on this but also, and more significantly, it does not facilitate choice by learners (it rewards post-16 secondary schools for holding on to learners who might achieve better elsewhere) nor by employers. For example, it does not incentivise FEIs to develop and deliver services to business. It is only some of the medium to larger and more entrepreneurially developed colleges in the main who have taken on this role in a very significant way and this is reflected in their audited accounts of their external non-Welsh Assembly Government income. External income generation in the financial year 2008–9 was between circa £3–£9 million per annum in larger colleges.



91. For the UK, The Leitch Report (2006) recommended that all publicly funded learning post-19 should be towards qualifications approved by employer-led Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and this was endorsed by the Sir Adrian Webb Review (Promise and Performance: The Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the context of the Learning Country: Vision in to Action 2007). We also endorse that principle that Wales will deliver that through a combination of SSCs and the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB).

92. The Webb Review went on to say that:

“Work-based learning providers have some of the best access to trainers and assessors with industry standard experience, and to employers. They must unquestionably be full and equal members of 14–19 partnership Consortia and play a full role in developing the Welsh Bac.”

The role of work-based learning is highly significant and it is welcomed by the Task and Finish Group that more WBL providers, including colleges are ‘teaming/grouping up’ to tender for new contracts of delivery.

Further education’s position in and contribution to a Regional Consortia Structure

93. It is readily realised that in order to embrace and significantly enhance a learner’s experience and access to high-quality vocational and academic programmes post-14, the competition between schools and FE needs reducing and especially in areas where there are small sixth forms. The economies of scale in a regional consortium/network present greater opportunities for learners, wider access and knowledge of strategic information and labour market intelligence, reduced costs, the development of a mutually supportive inter-organisational culture and ensuring the best possible service to the learner through combined resources. It is about the creation of a model of interdependence and consequently a richer curriculum offering and the systems to drive up standards across all sectors. It is also about a post-16 publicly funded model that is fit for purpose, can work for the learner as well as the regional consortium partners. Currently there are in Wales:

- 4 secondary schools with sixth forms under 50
- 28 secondary schools between 50–99 pupils

- 49 secondary schools between 100–149 pupils
- 38 secondary schools between 150–199 pupils
- 51 secondary schools with more than 200 pupils
- 21 FE institutions catering for almost 200,000 post-16 learners.

94. Regional consortia working and the outcomes of it will address in part the spare capacity issue in secondary schools and remove the present inability of small sixth forms to provide a necessary comprehensive menu for their post-14 and post-16 learners.

95. FE is demonstrating its willingness to develop existing active learning partnerships for 14–19 provision – our evidence is clear in the responses and good practice examples received.


96. 11–16 schools can also demonstrate their partnership qualities in 14–16 arrangements (see the examples of good practice in the colleges' responses).

97. 11–18 schools and especially where there are smaller sixth forms within them are not as resolute in seeking a positive consorting arrangement – (Estyn reports and Task and Finish Group interviews undertaken with FE college leaders).

98. FEIs in regional consortium arrangements have large vocational resources to share with a greater number of learners and consequently improve opportunities and raise achievements.

99. FEIs receive their WAG allocations direct and they are willing, along with 11–16 and 11–18 schools, and ready to bring their post-16 resource to the regional consortia tables and develop collaborative models of delivery 14-16-19 countrywide.

100. In our fact finding visits there was a united and significant view that colleges should maintain their independence and direct funding in any future financial funding arrangement but it was also realised that the way forward was full partnership and collaboration with the emerging regional consortia and highly visible and transparent contracting and monitoring of FE/school provision. Readers must also be reminded that FE allocations from Welsh Assembly Government also cover post-19 provision and the volume of work in post-19 education is enormous and will, according to demographic trends, increase.



101. Given that there are four developing regional consortia in Wales it seems organisationally sensible for colleges to look at mergers or groupings in order to operate as strong and 'kit wealthy' suppliers of vocational programmes for the regional consortia. Colleges operations are not co-terminus with local authorities, they serve extensive geographical areas and some would be required to work in more than one consortium. This arrangement will have implications for merger outcomes, governance and other important related factors such as funding, and staff contracts of employment.

102. If colleges and WBL providers were to continue to reconfigure/merge on a regional/sub regional scale and simultaneously become full partners in the regional consortia over the next two years then their combined contribution to provision and raising vocational/academic standards would be significantly visible to schools, parents/guardians and paramountly – to the learner. This would aid the process of driving out unnecessary duplication in schools and colleges and affording young people better curriculum opportunities and life chances.

103. The amount of support and 'navigability awareness' through curriculum provision, job opportunities that FE staff along with school staff and the Careers Wales service and Jobcentre Plus can bring to the table is quite substantial.

104. FEIs with schools can provide some of the necessary CPD in tandem with ColegauCymru for inter-institutional development and the creation of integrated 11/14/16+/FEcampuses. Our visits to colleges were highlighted by the close proximity of secondary schools to some colleges and in some cases as close as 50 to 100 metres. This immediate geographical proximity is a significant advantage in aiding the growth of integrated campuses – campuses that can work seamlessly for the benefit of the learner.

105. Travel across a consortium can focus on staff when more economical or on students when necessary or via on line delivery. This demands synchronised timetabling but it is evident from our responses that this can be done. Half day or day provision was seen as 'small time' with too many travel journeys. A concentration on block type release for vocational work is seen as essential for an effective post-14 network.

106. The accountability of an FE college with its own governance arrangements must be supplemented to one where the FEI has a duty to drive and measure the effectiveness and impact of itself within a context of a local and regional partnership.

107. Colleges need to plan with all members of the consortium delineated targets and outcomes for learners which will be self monitored and independently analysed by a National Educational Standards Unit as well as quality based Estyn inspections. In this context Estyn will be required to develop robust methodologies for inspecting partnerships and being cognisant of the individual and combined input into provision.

108. Pooling resources in a regional consortia arrangement embraces and promotes further a public view that FEIs are there for the public good and support for their communities. In this context the recently announced review of 16–19 funding is welcomed.

109. As a consequence they become joint social enterprises characterised by wider social ownership for the development of the learners/people they provide for.

110. Regional consortia with a membership of FE together with WBL and secondary school providers can create and maximise common aspirations for excellence and specialisation in a range of expensive capital provision to include: engineering, construction, creative and media industries and a range of other very financially high capital requirement vocational areas.

111. In summary FE in partnership with secondary schools within a regional consortium can develop and facilitate the following key learner opportunities.

- Consortium/area-wide availability of curriculum and vocational frameworks/pathways.
- Specialist vocational facilities and reduce duplication.
- e-learning platforms and community portals for education and training and for employees.
- Individual learning plans with a wide choice of pathways.
- Consortium area-wide CPD.
- Careers advice on a wider and more informed scale.
- A navigable regional 'web-based' and printed prospectus.
- Underpinning systems of back office support.
- A model for integrated campuses.



Significant findings

112. In this chapter on further education we have encountered many important findings all of which need to be highlighted and we list them here.

113. Additionally, we also want to state our important conclusions and these have been placed them in the composite chapter entitled 'Conclusions'.

- Firstly, that the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) was perceived to be predominantly a funding mechanism and not a planning system.
- Secondly, the annual Provision Development Plan was also seen to be a very weak instrument for informing DCELLS about college planning intentions. Many college Principals regretted that DCELLS had abandoned the requirement to submit a strategic plan to DCELLS even though a plan is debated at their governing corporations. As a consequence there was no perceived formal way of colleges informing DCELLS of their intentions and consequently economic or educational training developments were sometimes happening but not necessarily noticed by DCELLS regions or centrally.
- It is seen that FE has a significant HE component to its work and FE works well in HEI partnerships. This aspect of FE is seen to be a growing one and needs to be maintained as it brings HE in a part/full-time mode closer to the learner.
- Income above and beyond the Welsh Assembly Government allocation is an essential component of colleges' business and is derived from a range of sources and in the larger FEIs many have Business Development Units or a form of commercial services unit which seeks contracts with business and industry. These income creating activities must be recognised as essential to colleges' futures. The strength of commercial operations in large FE institutions cannot be understated.
- The quality and capability of DCELLS staff in understanding present day FE was often questioned in our deliberations with colleges. An understanding of what, and sometimes why, a modern college does or would wish to do in serving its communities was lacking.

- In terms of governance and accountability it is self-evident that college accountability is high and transparent. In larger colleges and merged colleges maintaining this element of transparent governance together with local accountability was seen as essential and was in place or being put in place dependent on how recent the merger.
- Small colleges are unable to secure the larger financial capital requirements of fast changing vocational requirements.
- Colleges need to deal with tangible performance evidence, address the economic concerns of their areas, and have more labour market intelligence, better college/school planning data and synchronised timetabling with secondary schools wherever possible on the 14-16-19 continuum. It must be underlined that this latter requirement is one which demands commitment from heads of secondary schools and college principals not a temporary partnership arrangement.
- Literacy and numeracy is a clear concern for colleges in Wales as it is in schools.
- Colleges inspected had good systems for managing and improving the quality of their provision. Over the course of the inspection cycle good or outstanding grades for managing quality were awarded to about two-thirds of providers.
- Estyn reports in the 2011 Annual Report that:

“Standards in further education institutions have improved over the last six years. They are now much higher than they were in 2004 when they were good or very good in 52% of the learning areas we inspected. By July 2010, this figure of good to very good had increased to just over 85%.”
- Leadership and management have improved at senior and middle levels. However, it was evidenced that over the last 2004–2010 Estyn inspection cycle there were more shortcomings and significant weaknesses in the quality of self-evaluation than in any other key question. It was also observed by Estyn that the overall approach to the management of quality lacked challenge and was not thorough enough.

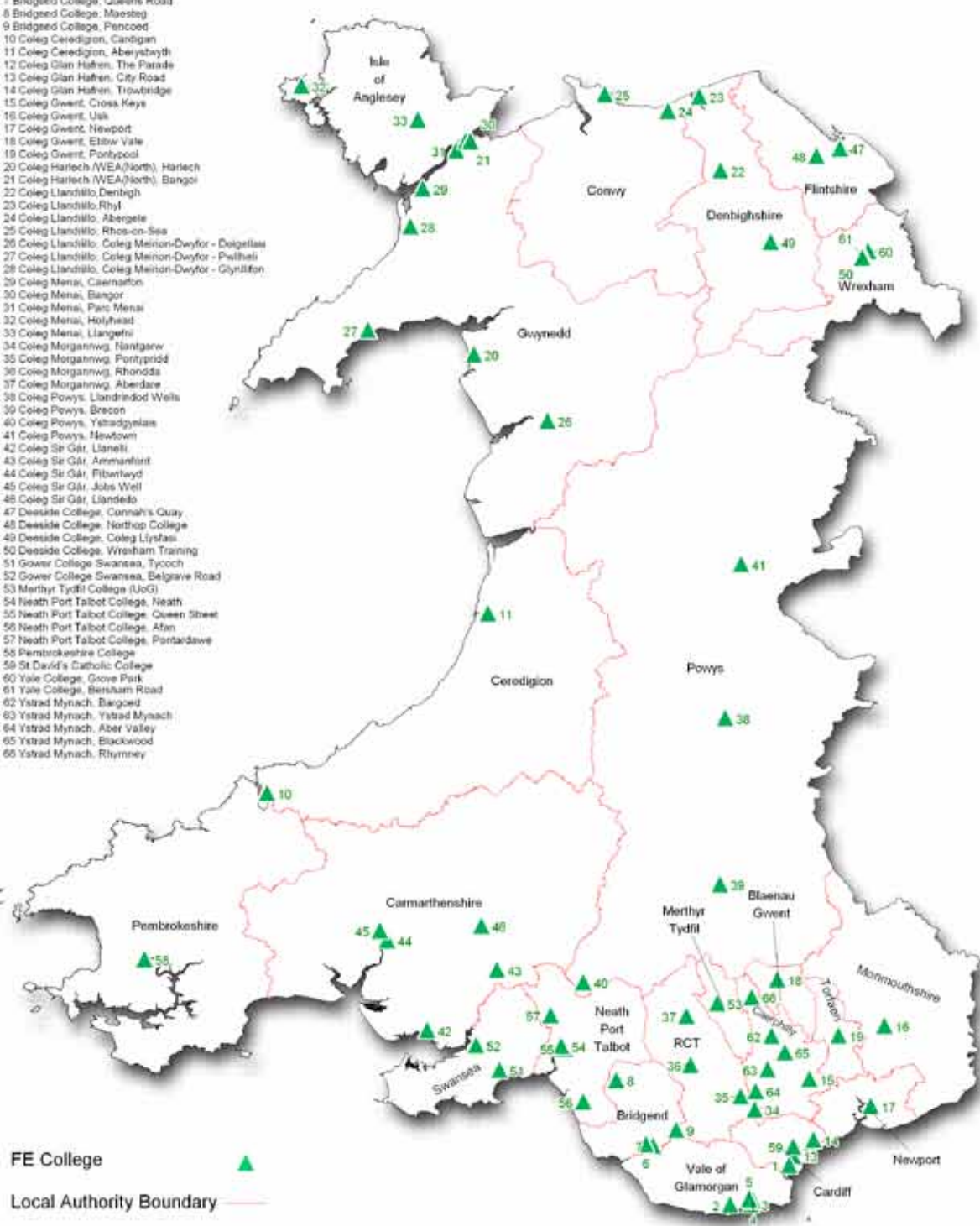
- In the colleges visited new buildings and facilities have resulted in an improvement in learners' results and attendance, and reduced a decline in new learners signing up for courses. Estyn reports that:

“The average improvement in learners' results for the learning areas that have had new buildings and facilities is better than the improvement within the college as a whole. Colleges that have built new accommodation and facilities have better average improvement in learner results than the average for all Welsh colleges.”

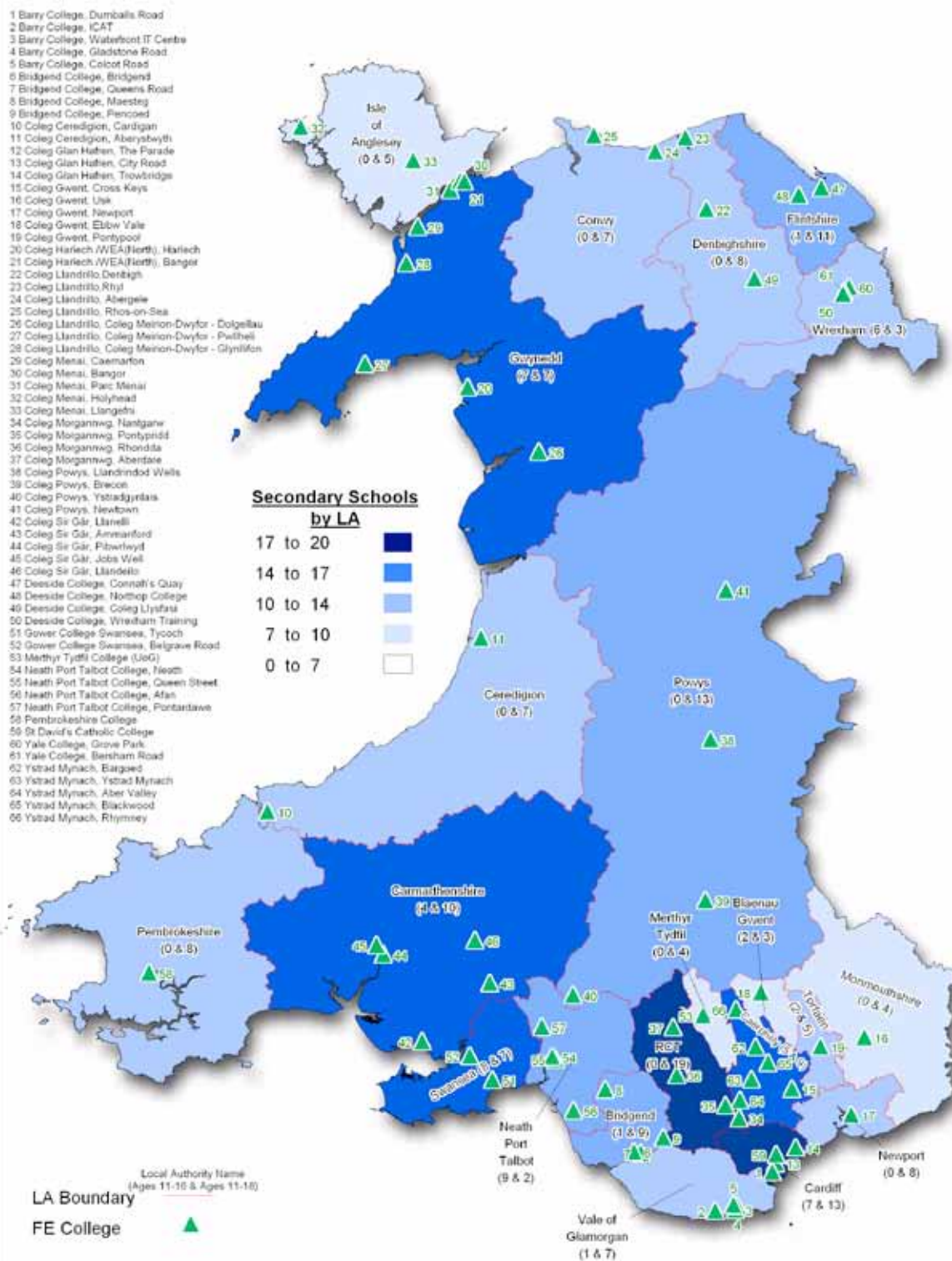
- New buildings and facilities improve the good relationships colleges have with employers. They help colleges increase the number of employers they work with and improve the level of sponsorship they receive.
- Some colleges have begun to work better with partners, such as local authorities, to develop their estates for a wider range of learners, including those aged 14–19. Deeside College's 14–19 Core Centre is seen as an excellent example.
- It was readily concluded that joint CPD between schools and colleges will become a necessity as 14–16–19 developments became formalised. ColegauCymru as well as individual colleges have a wealth of expertise to bring to this area of development.
- Our fact finding visits to colleges showed that geographical proximity to secondary schools could be a significant advantage in aiding the growth of integrated campuses. With integrated campuses integrated provision becomes a natural outcome with seamless provision for the benefit of the learner.
- WBL providers are increasingly collaborating on partnership tendering to DCELLS often led by a large college or group of FE colleges working with other training providers.
- The standards achieved and qualifications attained by work-based learners' success in attaining full qualification frameworks have improved year on year. The latest figures, from the Welsh Assembly Government, StatsWales (2010) showed a 75 per cent success rate for full framework attainment across all providers.

Further Education (FE) Colleges' Main Campuses in Wales, Jan.'11

- 1 Barry College, Dundalls Road
- 2 Barry College, ICAT
- 3 Barry College, Waterfront IT Centre
- 4 Barry College, Gladstone Road
- 5 Barry College, Colcot Road
- 6 Bridgend College, Bridgend
- 7 Bridgend College, Queens Road
- 8 Bridgend College, Maesteg
- 9 Bridgend College, Pencoed
- 10 Coleg Ceredigion, Cardigan
- 11 Coleg Ceredigion, Aberystwyth
- 12 Coleg Glan Hafren, The Parade
- 13 Coleg Glan Hafren, City Road
- 14 Coleg Glan Hafren, Trowbridge
- 15 Coleg Gwent, Cross Keys
- 16 Coleg Gwent, Usk
- 17 Coleg Gwent, Newport
- 18 Coleg Gwent, Elbow Vale
- 19 Coleg Gwent, Pontypool
- 20 Coleg Harlech (WEA/Isorh), Harlech
- 21 Coleg Harlech (WEA/Isorh), Bangor
- 22 Coleg Llandrillo, Denbigh
- 23 Coleg Llandrillo, Rhyl
- 24 Coleg Llandrillo, Abergele
- 25 Coleg Llandrillo, Rhos-on-Sea
- 26 Coleg Llandrillo, Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor - Dolgellau
- 27 Coleg Llandrillo, Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor - Pwllheli
- 28 Coleg Llandrillo, Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor - Glynifon
- 29 Coleg Menai, Caernarfon
- 30 Coleg Menai, Bangor
- 31 Coleg Menai, Pafis Menai
- 32 Coleg Menai, Holyhead
- 33 Coleg Menai, Llangefni
- 34 Coleg Morgannwg, Nantgarw
- 35 Coleg Morgannwg, Pontypridd
- 36 Coleg Morgannwg, Rhondda
- 37 Coleg Morgannwg, Aberdare
- 38 Coleg Powys, Llandrinod Wells
- 39 Coleg Powys, Brecon
- 40 Coleg Powys, Ystradgynlais
- 41 Coleg Powys, Newtown
- 42 Coleg Sir Gâr, Llanelli
- 43 Coleg Sir Gâr, Ammanford
- 44 Coleg Sir Gâr, Fiberteyd
- 45 Coleg Sir Gâr, Jabs Well
- 46 Coleg Sir Gâr, Llandello
- 47 Deeside College, Connah's Quay
- 48 Deeside College, Northop College
- 49 Deeside College, Coleg Llystfawr
- 50 Deeside College, Wrexham Training
- 51 Gower College Swansea, Tycnoch
- 52 Gower College Swansea, Belgrave Road
- 53 Merthyr Tydfil College (UoG)
- 54 Neath Port Talbot College, Neath
- 55 Neath Port Talbot College, Queen Street
- 56 Neath Port Talbot College, Afan
- 57 Neath Port Talbot College, Portardawe
- 58 Penbrokeshire College
- 59 St David's Catholic College
- 60 Vale College, Grove Park
- 61 Vale College, Bersham Road
- 62 Ystrad Mynach, Bargoed
- 63 Ystrad Mynach, Ystrad Mynach
- 64 Ystrad Mynach, Aber Valley
- 65 Ystrad Mynach, Blackwood
- 66 Ystrad Mynach, Rhymer



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Arrangements between Further Education Institutions and Schools
(WAG Circular No 007/2009)

National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Learning Committee's
Inquiry into Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training
(NEETs) Reducing the Proportion of Young People not in Education,
Employment or Training in Wales (April 2009)

One Wales: A Progressive Agenda for Wales (June 2007)

Tribal Benchmarking: www.tribalbenchmarking.co.uk/wales/Home.aspx

The key benefits that underpin the benchmarking project include:

- the provision of a web-based self-assessment tool that facilitates diagnostic analysis and supports decision-making for providers
- a tool which enables providers to learn from best practice to enhance their own processes and drive improvements in quality and value for money thereby contributing to a culture of self-improvement amongst providers
- a tool which helps providers to make comparisons both within and outside of Wales establishing an understanding of the relationship between cost and quality in each sector.

Chapter 6: Local authorities

1. Following the reorganisation of local government in 1995/1996 22 local authorities (LAs) were created in Wales. As part of the reorganisation 22 education departments were created. The population of our 22 unitary authorities is as follows.

Table 1: Population of local authorities in Wales (mid-2009)

Authority	Population
Isle of Anglesey	68,800
Gwynedd	118,800
Conwy	111,400
Denbighshire	96,700
Flintshire	149,900
Wrexham	133,200
Powys	131,700
Ceredigion	76,400
Pembrokeshire	117,400
Carmarthenshire	180,800
Swansea	231,300
Neath Port Talbot	137,400
Bridgend	134,200
The Vale of Glamorgan	124,600
Cardiff	336,200
Rhondda Cynon Taff	234,400
Merthyr Tydfil	55,700
Caerphilly	172,700
Blaenau Gwent	68,600
Torfaen	90,700
Monmouthshire	88,000
Newport	140,400
Wales	2,999,300
Average local authority population	136,300

Source: StatsWales

2. It is reasonable to compare the population served by LAs in Wales with those in England so that there is some clear perspective of the size of the population served in the five largest and five smallest LAs in England.

Table 2: The five largest education authorities in England (mid-2009 population)

	Population
West Midlands Metropolitan County	2,638,700
Greater Manchester Metropolitan County	2,600,900
West Yorkshire	2,226,700
Kent	1,411,100
Essex	1,399,000

Table 3: Five smallest education authorities in England (mid-2009 population)

	Population
Rutland Unitary Authority	38,400
Hartlepool Unitary Authority	90,900
Darlington Unitary Authority	100,400
Bracknell Forest Unitary Authority	115,100
Halton Unitary Authority	118,700

3. There continues to be a debate whether the number and size of LAs created in Wales in 1996 was appropriate but that is not a debate for us. In terms of education we are where we are and it seems unlikely that changes are to occur in the immediate foreseeable future. We are advised that costs of wholesale reorganisations are quite immense and currently not on the immediate agenda of any political party in Wales.

4. There is evidence that some LAs have worked in partnership with others in formal and informal ways from 1996. Frequently this resulted in some shared services and was based on a clear understanding that, for reasons of cost saving, capacity or indeed in some instances to preserve long standing commitments, and this was an appropriate way to proceed.


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- 5.** Each LA has statutory functions to discharge and over time policies relating for example to the wellbeing of children have evolved between the LA education departments and other services within a LA. Some LAs have dedicated education departments, others have linked education with leisure and lifelong learning and some within an overarching children's services department. Some LAs have a corporate director with responsibility for education and other services, others have a designated director of education or chief education officer, whilst some have a senior officer with a designated responsibility for education.
 - 6.** There is no need here to outline the complete range of statutory responsibilities placed on an education department or indeed on an individual education officer or elected member. We will not be making recommendations that will fundamentally change statutory responsibilities, though we make the case for closer cooperation in an attempt to resolve difficulties. The proposed Education (Wales) Measure will allow for this. It is more appropriate to look at certain issues that actively concern all LA.
 - 7.** The first of these is the responsibility that exists for improving the quality of education provided for all learners. Some data relating to changes in performance across the LAs at the end of Key Stage 4 has already been noted elsewhere.
 - 8.** The most recent published information relating to pupil performance at the various key stages of education may be seen by accessing www.statswales.wales.gov.uk
 - 9.** There are differences in outcomes between LAs at various key stages of education and it is appropriate to remind everyone that raw statistics are what they say they are and should be placed in the context of other information such as the various indicators that are used to identify possible deprivation in any given school or LA.
 - 10.** We include value added statistics relating to Key Stages 2–4 over a period of 2005–2010.

Table 4: Value added, Key Stages 2–4 2005–2010

	Value Added KS2 Level 2 (Percentage) 2005–10	Value Added KS2 – KS4 Level 2 including English/Welsh and maths (Percentage) 2005–10
Neath Port Talbot	6.36	4.88
The Vale of Glamorgan	3.84	0.54
Newport	3.35	-0.11
Caerphilly	2.78	2.66
Merthyr Tydfil	2.38	-2.59
Conwy	1.98	-0.52
Blaenau Gwent	1.98	4.47
Isle of Anglesey	1.47	2.01
Gwynedd	1.44	0.25
Wrexham	0.37	1.85
Flintshire	0.33	6.19
Torfaen	0.33	-3.75
Carmarthenshire	0.17	3.86
All Wales (average)	0	0
Rhondda Cynon Taff	-0.23	-0.23
Swansea	-0.40	2.65
Powys	-1.13	2.46
Ceredigion	-2.22	-6.04
Cardiff	-2.78	-2.55
Pembrokeshire	-3.03	-6.58
Bridgend	-3.28	-1.63
Denbighshire	-4.87	-6.96
Monmouthshire	-8.91	-9.27

Source: DCELLS

11. From the information that we have secured relating to pupil performance and outcomes it is clear that for some years LA education departments have operated in significantly different ways in their attempts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

12. To summarise the position in simple terms as perceived by school leaders and teachers:

"We are properly challenged and supported by our LA at all levels. We welcome the role that the LA through its officers plays in helping us at schools improve all aspects of our work. This is now a natural part of the way that we work. The children in our care gain and we as heads and teachers gain from the process.

We welcome the support and challenge that we have from the LA but we sometimes have doubts about the actual experience, therefore the credibility, of some of those doing the challenging.

We are never challenged or for that matter supported by our LA through its officers."

13. It is fair to report that the third category of response was seen in a minority of instances, but nevertheless made with some vigour. It is also fair to report that we did not meet a single individual that challenged the right and responsibility of a LA to operate in this way. Indeed there was a clear view that this was a proper and welcome role that should lead to improvement.

14. Consequently, there has not been a real consistent and robust mechanism in place in all our LAs that provides a clear direction of travel or that indicates in all cases who is responsible for improvement and how that will be measured and assessed. In some LAs the line of responsibility and accountability is clear from the director of education to headteachers, and governors and demonstrably is seen to be taking place. In other LAs the roles and responsibilities are less sharply focussed.

15. Estyn reported that in the last cycle of inspection in terms of strategic management no LA secured a complete package of Grade 1 responses. Professor David Reynolds has argued that in his view there are two LA in Wales that could be deemed to be 'world class'.

16. The second issue that exercises all LAs is that of surplus places. The position in Wales at January 2010 is at Appendix 10. In summary, 15.6 per cent of secondary school places and 20.3 per cent of primary school places were then unfilled: a total of 94,534 surplus places.

17. The view of the Auditor General for Wales is that there should be no more than 10 per cent surplus places in Wales. The National Audit Office for Northern Ireland argued that a position of 10 per cent surplus places was acceptable in the evidence given to the Independent Strategic Review of Education in December 2006. There appears therefore to be some measure of consensus.



18. Moreover the National Assembly of Wales Public Accounts Committee considered this issue as part of their capital investment in schools review in December 2010. This committee has representation from all political parties. All the recommendations are pertinent but in this context the following are noted:

“We recommend that the Welsh Government provide clear policy guidance on the issue of surplus places to ensure that local authorities act coherently across Wales to address the issue.


We recommend that the Welsh Government, in association with the WLGA encourage collaboration between local authorities to develop their ability to deliver the programme on a long term basis with a reduced need for central support from the Welsh Government.”

The full report may be found on www.assemblywales.org

19. Consequently, there is the challenge for the Welsh Assembly Government to declare a clear policy and potential timescale. Moreover, it is understood that although currently the responsibility for determining issues relating to surplus places rests with each LA there is an obvious need for collaboration and coherence between LAs throughout Wales.

20. The sensitivity of restructuring the schools estate is fully recognised by the Public Accounts Committee, since school closures, amalgamations and federations can and do impact on pupils and communities. This is an emotive issue, particularly so when the outcome might be the closure of a small village school or a small sixth form. Proper consultation must take place with stakeholders. Nevertheless, this issue will not go away. There is a need to tackle the problem. This is not the appropriate vehicle to make judgements as to the appropriate size and location of primary and secondary schools in Wales. Evidence relating to school size and the performance of pupils particularly in small schools is already published.

21. Many LAs have already commenced the process and published plans. These plans attempt to use resources in a more sensible and sustainable way. There is an attempt to find solutions that offer long term opportunities for pupils and their teachers. Currently, with our 22 LAs there are a significant number of ‘borders’. Some LAs, due to their geography, have borders with many other LAs and some of these straddle a single street or cut through a village. Common sense would suggest that it is imperative for neighbours to have productive discussions and to seek sensible solutions.



22. There is a perception that collaboration between authorities impacts only on the primary sector. This is nonsense since collaboration in providing Welsh-medium education generally and particularly in the 14–19 age range in offering both vocational and academic courses should be possible. Collaboration between schools with sixth forms and locally based FE colleges is a distinct necessity.

23. The growth in demand for Welsh-medium education is well documented and there is a requirement on LAs to build capacity in to their plans. What makes the whole issue quite complicated is that though the population and demand for school places may be declining in certain LAs and indeed within certain areas in a single LA, it is a fact that some LAs are planning for an increase in population over the next period of years.

24. At the level of a LA there is also a link in terms of effectively using resources and improving performance at school level. The difference seen in per pupil spend in some very small schools when compared to larger neighbouring schools is quite immense in some cases. Surveys have noted that there is no direct correlation between the amount spent per pupil and performance. The pressures placed on teachers in some very small schools with mixed age classes and a requirement to deliver the national curriculum in full is also challenging. Some LAs currently in analysing the issues surrounding surplus places link this matter directly to the school improvement agenda and the effective and efficient use of resources for all pupils.

25. The statistics demonstrate that in 2009 for the primary sector:

- 61 schools in Wales had up to 25 pupils
- 156 schools had between 26–50 pupils
- 240 schools had between 51–100 pupils
- 486 schools had between 101–200 pupils
- 319 schools had between 201–300 pupils
- 137 schools had between 301–400 pupils
- 74 schools had between 401–600 pupils
- 5 had over 600 pupils.

26. Though the figures may well have changed the Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland, in the context of effectiveness and efficiency, recommended that there would be an automatic review of sustainability in any primary school that fell below 140 pupils in urban areas and 105 pupils in rural areas.



27. Currently in Wales at secondary level there are:

- 13 schools with less than 400 pupils
- 30 schools with between 401–600 pupils
- 55 schools between 601–800 pupils
- 44 schools with between 801–1000 pupils
- 66 schools with between 1001–1500 pupils
- 14 schools with between 1501–2000 pupils
- 1 school with more than 2001 pupils.

Additionally:

- 4 schools have a sixth form of between 1–49 pupils
- 28 schools have between 50–99 pupils
- 49 schools have between 100–149 pupils
- 38 schools have between 150–199 pupils
- 51 schools have sixth forms with more than 200 pupils.

28. We also have a range of specialised schools that meet the needs of children and young people who have very specific additional learning needs.

29. So that there is no ambiguity, for reasons of geography, language or faith, there cannot be a one size fits all solution to issues that relate to the size of schools. However, the repercussions of retaining small schools and sixth forms must be acknowledged and fully understood by all. It is also noted that some LAs have worked in partnership with schools in mothballing buildings and in providing opportunities for other services to be delivered at school sites, ranging from crèches for very young children, library facilities and facilities used by the health and social services. Moreover, many examples of productive community use can be seen in several places during and after the school day and indeed during holiday periods.

30. LAs are therefore currently grappling with a range of issues relating to size, location and type of school. The problems that accrue due to the significant cuts in capital spending over the next period of years make the challenges more pronounced and the necessity for dialogue and collaboration more essential than ever. These issues and challenges will not go away. Now, more than ever the strategic deployment of capital resources is essential.

31. A third issue currently for LA is that of finance. By definition, the resources that are made available for education in Wales and the use made of these resources have an impact on everyone.

32. Factually, we spend more per head on education in Wales than is spent in England, but less than is spent in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Table 5: Total identifiable expenditure on education, per head, 2004–5 to 2008–9

Total education					£ per head
	2004–5 Outturn	2005–6 Outturn	2006–7 Outturn	2007–8 Outturn	2008–9 Outturn
England	1,067	1,137	1,177	1,259	1,330
Wales	1,130	1,180	1,244	1,324	1,388
Scotland	1,209	1,289	1,394	1,431	1,462
Northern Ireland	1,250	1,298	1,327	1,382	1,420


Source: PESA 2010

33. When we look at the average spend per pupil in LA in Wales, in 2009–2010 the figure is £5,595. It is an increase on the previous year. However it is £604 per pupil lower than in England and £412 per pupil lower than in England excluding London.

34. Within Wales there are differences in the amount of money spent on pupils.

Table 6: Total education expenditure per pupil 2009–10

Authority	£ per pupil
Isle of Anglesey	6,090
Gwynedd	5,754
Conwy	5,642
Denbighshire	5,619
Flintshire	5,457
Wrexham	5,563
Powys	6,101
Ceredigion	6,340
Pembrokeshire	5,690



Authority	£ per pupil
Carmarthenshire	5,620
Swansea	5,490
Neath Port Talbot	5,802
Bridgend	5,238
The Vale of Glamorgan	5,001
Cardiff	5,457
Rhondda Cynon Taff	5,552
Merthyr Tydfil	5,622
Caerphilly	5,667
Blaenau Gwent	6,213
Torfaen	5,357
Monmouthshire	5,831
Newport	5,430
Wales	5,595

A source: StatsWales SB4/2011

Other useful financial information may be found in Statistical Bulletin SB 43/2010 on www.statswales.wales.gov.uk

35. It is important to read all the documentation with explanation notes to gain a full picture of the comparisons that are made.

36. There are significant differences between Wales and England and between LAs in Wales in the amounts spent on education.

37. Concern has been expressed not only by educators and parents but also by politicians as to reasons why there is such a discrepancy. In order to secure an objective view, the Minister commissioned an independent review of the cost of administering education in Wales in April 2010. The review conducted by PwC lead to a debate within Wales and within the various sectors of education. Some 77 per cent of the retained and delegated LA expenditure was spent on learning and teaching, the other 23 per cent spent on a variety of support activities. Elements of the delegated budgets are retained centrally to help provide a range of services. The total budget analysed amounted to £1,843 million and of this the retained element in total amounted to £806.5 million. This is over 43 per cent of the budget although overall some 83 per cent of retained and delegated funding was spent on front line services. In the FE sector the same report indicates that some 59 per cent of funding is spent on front line services. The complete document may be viewed on www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/educationreview2010/?lang=en

38. LAs in Wales currently delegate different percentages of the total education budget to schools. Frequently, individual LAs retain some money to deliver a range of services that are agreed with the schools after appropriate discussions and do so at their request. This appears not to be the case in all LAs.

39. The current position in Wales is as follows:

Table 7: Budget delegation rates 2010–11

Authority	Delegation rate
Isle of Anglesey	67%
Gwynedd	75%
Conwy	75%
Denbighshire	73%
Flintshire	71%
Wrexham	75%
Powys	69%
Ceredigion	71%
Pembrokeshire	75%
Carmarthenshire	77%
Swansea	73%
Neath Port Talbot	76%
Bridgend	78%
The Vale of Glamorgan	83%
Cardiff	78%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	74%
Merthyr Tydfil	81%
Caerphilly	72%
Blaenau Gwent	76%
Torfaen	74%
Monmouthshire	73%
Newport	76%
Average for Wales	75%

40. Headteachers and governors of schools manage the budgets to meet the needs of pupils, and as part of this process some schools build reserves which should be earmarked for specific projects and developments. The purpose of providing financial resources to schools is to deploy these in the best interests of pupils attending the school. Some schools in Wales are running deficit budgets. The regulations in the context of deficit budgets are clear. Best practice appears to be that this position is negotiated thoroughly between schools, through the headteacher and governing body and the LA through the director of education or a senior representative and is allowed only if a recovery plan is agreed and adhered to within a given time frame. It would be surprising if any other form of agreement would be acceptable.

41. The reserves held by schools as of 31 March 2010 are as follows.

Table 8: School reserves at 31 March 2010

Authority	Reserves (£ million)
Isle of Anglesey	3.1
Gwynedd	3.8
Conwy	4.5
Denbighshire	1.3
Flintshire	2.9
Wrexham	0.9
Powys	2.5
Ceredigion	0.8
Pembrokeshire	3.9
Carmarthenshire	5.5
Swansea	3.9
Neath Port Talbot	3.4
Bridgend	4.3
The Vale of Glamorgan	2.9
Cardiff	5.6
Rhondda Cynon Taff	5.6
Merthyr Tydfil	1.2
Caerphilly	6.8
Blaenau Gwent	0.8
Torfaen	2.3
Monmouthshire	1.3
Newport	4.0
Total for Wales	71.4



The full details may be found in Statistical Bulletin SDR 173/2010 on www.statswales.wales.gov.uk

42. Much discussion has occurred relating to the differences between school budgets in England and Wales and the potential impact of this on pupil performance and the provision of resources of different kinds for schools. The hard research evidence demonstrates there is no direct correlation between the amount of money spent per pupil, class size and the performance of pupils, particularly after the pupils reach a certain age. However, we take the view that the cumulative effect of underfunding over a period of years must impact on the quality of the education that we offer. Discussions also continue in the context of reserves held in school budgets that may appear to be excessive since by definition the resources are provided to be spent on pupils.

43. It does appear that certain LAs may be in the process of reclaiming moneys not used or reserved for a very specific purpose. Significant arguments have been advanced that a percentage of the budget devolved to schools rather than an arbitrary sum of money would be more relevant in determining the level of reserves that should be held by a school before action could be taken to withdraw such a reserve so that the different size of schools can be better accommodated. We see this as a sensible way forward and suggest that this issue be actively considered.

44. The guiding principle for delegated budgets is that all resources are best used for the good of learners in the short and medium term. Putting money away for the sake only of creating a reserve with no real plan or purpose for use, by definition, is foolish. It has been argued by some that very large financial reserves demonstrate that there has been over provision of resources. We reject that argument but understand why it might be seductive for other departments within a LA to come to this conclusion and in times of financial difficulties for some politicians also to agree.

45. There is an obvious difference between the use of money and the effective and efficient use of money, and various factors contribute to this aspect of the work of LAs.

46. A fourth challenge facing LAs is that of implementing national policy.



47. The Foundation Phase is based on the principle that early years' provision should offer a sound foundation for future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum. It places great emphasis on children learning by doing. Young children will be given more opportunities to gain first hand experiences through play and active involvement rather than by completing exercises in books. They will be given time to develop their speaking and listening skills and to become confident in their reading and writing abilities.


48. Mathematics will be more practical so that children can see how problems are solved and how important mathematics is in their everyday lives. There will be more emphasis on children understanding how things work and on finding different ways to solve problems.

49. The Foundation Phase sets out the curriculum and outcomes under seven Areas of Learning. For each Area of Learning, the educational programme sets out what children should be taught and the outcomes set out expected standards of children's performance.

50. Delivering the curriculum for pupils aged 14–16 and 16–18 is a further challenge. LAs work in partnership with their schools, but there is a requirement to work with other partners in education including the FE sector and some private providers to provide coherence. There are clear national policies created to broaden the range of opportunities available to all pupils in this age range. Policies are based on the needs of pupils and students and on the understanding that this can and should be delivered through a partnership of providers working for the good of learners. It may be seen that this is making good progress in some parts of Wales, but in other parts there is a significant way to go.

51. In some parts of Wales LAs through schools and other providers have an excellent working relationship based on a genuine acceptance that it is the learner that is at the centre of determining what the need may be. Institutions serve that need in proper partnership. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between perception and reality, nevertheless the perception is that in some parts of Wales, schools and FE colleges actively compete against each other. This is completely unacceptable: learners lose out. The current Minister for education uses blunt and forthright language: in that spirit therefore, the needs of pupils and students come first, LAs, FE colleges and 'others', resolve this issue with some urgency.

52. Issues that relate to provision, quality, effective and efficient use of resources, planning for the future and providing choice for the learner are involved. These will not go away. Partnership, not competition must be the way forward.




53. Faced with a range of challenges encompassing capacity, effective and efficient use of money and potential savings that might be secured by working in different ways, LAs through ADEW began the process of working together in groups some years ago and this has now evolved to the position where there are four consortia of LAs working closely together potentially for mutual benefit and by definition for the benefit of schools and pupils in their care.

54. The original purpose of creating regions was to help in the process of the appraisal of headteachers. Significant movement and development has occurred over the years. Currently, the South East Wales region includes the LAs of Blaenau-Gwent, Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. The Central South region includes the LAs of Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. The North region includes the LAs of Conway, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Ynys Mon. The SWAMWAC region includes the LAs of Carmarthen, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys and Swansea.

55. Many months, potentially years could go by if we begin to unpick the constituent parts of the current consortia. We could envisage a complex process of consultation with educators, the public and politicians and a whole range of arguments that would distract us from dealing with the real issues that we now face in education. We need to improve the quality of both the delivery of education and outcomes by using the experience and knowledge of those teachers, leaders and schools that are currently providing learners with an education of the highest possible quality.

56. By working together LAs have identified some of the key strategies that are used in high performing schools and how best to use this knowledge for the benefit of all. This has led to the development of the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) based on the key principles of:

- achieving better learning outcomes and wellbeing for all children and young people regardless of their socio economic background
- reducing the variation in learning outcomes within and between classrooms, schools and local authorities.



57. These aims are to be achieved through:

- ensuring tri-level working that brings together the education community (schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government) to work collaboratively to develop a new paradigm for educational reform
- focusing on improvements in the quality of teaching and of leadership as key factors in achieving these ends
- improving learning outcomes and wellbeing in schools throughout Wales
- ensuring effective interface between services that support children and young people
- building upon and extending good practice undertaken by schools, local authorities including collaborative consortium working
- working with Estyn so that School Effectiveness Framework, inspection and self-evaluation systems are aligned.

58. Following the visit of Michael Fullen to Wales in 2010 the Minister decided to focus on three pillars:

- improving standards of literacy
- improving standards in numeracy
- eradicating the negative effective of deprivation on attainment.

59. It is clear therefore that in terms of school improvement a concerted approach has been made in an attempt to raise standards. However, it is important to place this admirable aspiration in the context of a range of issues that need to be resolved with some urgency.

60. We have had sight of a letter from H.M. Chief Inspector of Schools, now in the public domain, that considered the impact of collaborative working between LA services. Here we repeat without apology the issues that were raised in an attempt to secure an independent view of progress and identify a range of challenges that need to be resolved urgently.


61. In the context of School Improvement Services:

“They provide curriculum advice and support for individual schools and for groups of teachers across schools. However they also contribute to each participating authority’s statutory duty monitor, challenge and where necessary, to intervene in schools. In most cases they operate this monitoring role alongside other staff who work directly for the authority. On the whole the dual role works adequately but there can be issues some of which are listed below.

- 1. There is not always consistency in the quality and style of delivery of some services. School improvement advisers from ‘bought in services’ may vary in terms of the way they carry out their roles, for example in terms of the balance between support and challenge to schools, or because they are working with local authorities that have different approaches to school improvement. There is sometimes too much variation in the quality of curriculum support and advice provided by external services and this does not always match schools’ needs closely enough.**
- 2. There is not always clarity in the respective roles and accountability of the authority’s partnership with other school improvement companies such as ESIS and Cynnal.**
- 3. Conversely, where roles and responsibilities of authority officers and external staff are clearly differentiated, schools are better targeted in terms of challenge and support.**
- 4. There is potential for commercial conflict of interest for ESIS and Cynnal in giving hard messages to schools that might affect subsequent buy back of other company services by those schools.**

LAs do not hold partnerships to account well enough. Neither do they do enough to hold staff to account where there is joint planning and working going on.

There is need for better collaboration within many local authorities as well as between them. In many authorities there are often difficulties in developing consistently effective joint working between Education and Social Services departments. Whilst the causes of some of this are territorial the main issue appears to be logistics; the outcomes of day to day pressure and competing demand on time and other resources. This often arises from staffing instability and staffing shortages in Social Service departments. There are also issues about sharing data about vulnerable young people and their families.”




62. This is therefore an independent assessment and an implicit agenda for the future action that is required to ensure that improvements can take place and be sustained.

63. The challenge and support function of LAs are well understood. It could be argued that if a school was deemed to be failing or indeed placed in a category of needing additional support that a LA was not discharging its responsibility fully. A school does not fail overnight. The information and data that is now available relating to schools is quite immense. Headteachers and governing bodies have clear responsibilities in the context of evaluating progress within a school. This is also the responsibility of a LA. There needs to be clarity concerning lines of responsibility and accountability.

64. Who therefore monitors the performance of a LA? Arguably, Estyn through the Inspection framework makes judgements on the performance of a LA. These could range from Excellent to Failing. It is a matter of record that in recent years, one LA education department was deemed to be in the failing category and the Minister for Education put in place a Board to oversee the progress of the particular LA concerned. However, that does not answer the question. Estyn very properly came to a view and reported findings. Estyn properly inspects periodically, we educate our learners daily.

65. There is certainly a case for an ongoing analysis of progress and performance. Why didn't anyone know in a particular LA that it was failing, and why wasn't anything done about it prior to inspection? If it is right to criticise a LA for not identifying a potential failing school and taking action, then it follows that there is a need to monitor the progress of a LA. It is recognised that at a political level elected members through scrutiny committees carry out this function, but there appears to be a lack of consistency across Wales currently, particularly in the context of comparing the work undertaken in one LA to that in others.

66. Logically, it appears that since the Minister takes action in placing a Recovery Board to ensure that standards are raised in the performance of a LA then it should be the Minister through the national education department that should hold LAs to account for their performance in a robust and systematic way. It is abundantly clear that this does not take place currently.



67. LAs therefore working in consortia have evolved to a position where they are attempting to tackle the range of issues identified, recognising for a variety of reasons that one single LA may not be able to provide an excellent service in isolation and also that through cooperation and economies of scale there is the potential to provide financial savings that may be better diverted to the front line of teaching. To be absolutely clear, we see no case for diverting potential savings to other services within LAs. Resources are needed at the front line of teaching and learning.

68. The pace of change and development has varied between the four consortia. The consortia have provided us with information about their progress: this can be found on our web page (see Introduction above).

69. We take the view that in order to bring pace and coherence to the work of regional consortia, there needs to be clarity and direction at professional level. This is not a new tier of local government rather LAs cooperating for common good and for the benefit of schools and learners, consequently there is a strong case for a lead director to be selected to ensure that progress is maintained in a timely fashion. This is not an administrative function but one requiring leadership of the highest order to ensure that credibility is maintained at both professional and political levels. By definition this is a matter for leading politicians in the relevant consortia to resolve.

70. Clearly therefore aspirations and hopes for the future. The real challenge is to translate these into outcomes that make a real difference for the learners that are in our care. Moreover the second part of the challenge is to work with schools to explore and explain in detail the roles, responsibilities and expectations that there are as we move forward. In some instances to date this has been missing. There is uncertainty about 'who does what and where' and in the relationship between what may be determined at regional level and what actually occurs on the ground in some LAs. Again, in blunt language, that needs to be resolved urgently.

71. By cooperating good use can be made of a range of services.




72. It is recognised that the vital input provided by psychology services may well be enhanced and deployed in terms of the distinct specialisms that colleagues can offer, both through the medium of the Welsh and English language. Moreover, in the context of ALN more can be done by cooperating on a regional basis. We have no intention here of revisiting reviews that have been conducted in this context for learners in the pre- and post-16 age range and the analysis of what is best provided at national, regional or local area. Conclusions have been drawn and recommendations made. The challenge now is one of delivery.

73. Services such as those provided by Athrawon Bro may be better targeted in the future and take into account the specialisms of individual members of teams so that support may be deployed more effectively. We note the recent review of this service.

74. The recent review of the music service also identified various options for future development. It is surprising to note that the expertise of those team members who are properly trained and qualified as classroom teachers is not used productively in all LAs in Wales. Classroom teachers particularly in primary schools could well benefit from the support of trained colleagues and indeed there are opportunities to work with a group or cluster of schools for the benefit of learners. It is acknowledged that all members of music service teams be they qualified teachers or qualified instrumental teachers provide an essential service that benefits learners and provides opportunities through orchestral and choral work for young people to present their work and develop their talents in the public domain.

75. Higher education (HE) education departments currently work with schools across regions, in the context of initial and post graduate training of teachers. They also play a key role in validating a range of formal academic qualifications and take part in various in-service education initiatives. There is a powerful argument to suggest that cooperation between schools, FE and HE needs to develop in the future.


76. We note also that regional learning partnerships are emerging where various departments of LAs are working with schools, FE, HE and other providers for the benefit of learners. One such partnership may be seen in the South West Wales regional planning partnership and the scope of their work and potential for future development is included in an annex.



77. In considering the issues that concern improving outcomes and making effective and efficient use of resources, progress can be seen. It was however important to widen the research to see whether a LA, working with a clear purpose, could make a significant change in the context of improving outcomes over a relatively short period of time and if so what lessons could we learn.

78. Tower Hamlets provides us with one such example. The CEO of Tower Hamlets, formerly the Director of Education in the Borough indicated that:

1. Tower Hamlets had a history of poor performance in terms outcomes at various examination levels.
2. 77 per cent of children speak a second language.
3. 58 per cent of children are on free school meals.
4. 90 per cent of the education budget goes directly to schools. Of the 10 per cent retained money, 6 per cent is spent on back office support services. There is a schools forum between the LA and headteachers and agreement is reached relating to services and support that are best delivered centrally on behalf of primary and secondary schools. These included back office functions such as HR, finance for maternity cover, services such as music provision, and services that filled in some curriculum gaps, including but not exclusively, specialised language support.
5. In 1996 36 per cent of children achieved Key Stage 2 Level 4. In 2011 it is estimated that 82 per cent of children will achieve Key Stage 2 Level 4.
6. In 1996 with a cohort of around 2005 students about 300 went on to university. In 2011 it is predicted that over 1000 students will go on to university.
7. Post-16 there is one large college that around a third of learners attend. A further third attend a sixth form. The remainder leave the borough. Three secondary schools joined forces to create one sixth form in a shared central location.
8. Tower Hamlets is aggressive about ambition and relentless in pursuit of outcomes.
9. Tower Hamlets has an inclusive approach to working with areas outside education including health and social services.
10. Tower Hamlets has a well-resourced school improvement team. Annual reports are compiled on each school.

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11. With the devolution of resources to schools went the accountability for improved performance. Clarity on the data which is used and is at the heart of the improvement agenda is essential.
 12. Benchmarking information relating to key skills was needed at an early age. Rigorous diagnostic testing was in place at all key stages of education.
 13. There was a consistent requirement for schools to build capacity so that they could continually engage in the process of improving themselves.
 14. Improving the quality and capacity of those delivering education at all levels was essential.
 15. In their circumstances, high-quality governance was essential, particularly so when English for many in the community was a second language and there was a concern about their capacity to hold headteachers to account.
 16. Critical mass was significant in making effective and efficient use of all resources.
 17. Engaging with parents regularly was essential.

79. Arguably, there are issues identified here that we need to address in Wales. Implicit in the arguments advanced by the CEO was the vital importance of leadership at all levels and for clear lines of responsibility and accountability at all levels. Demonstrably therefore, change for the better can take place over a short period of time, and in the context of a set of circumstances that may well be replicated in Wales.

80. It has become increasingly clear during our review that in Wales accountability for school performance has become confused and in many cases difficult for parents to understand. It became obvious during a recent national conference relating to the SEF and indeed during our discussions that headteachers were sometimes confused as to the role of LAs and consortia. A more effective system of accountability is required which identifies an easily understood structure and set of responsibilities which are transparent and unambiguous and provide parents, educators and politicians with relevant data which will allow fair comparisons to be made with outcomes and performance in similar schools.


81. We are not persuaded currently that in all schools and all LAs we have done enough to empower parents so that they can make valid judgements concerning the progress of their children. We comment on raw and value added data elsewhere and parents have a fundamental right to access this information. We need to provide all parents with the information that they will find helpful in assessing the performance of their children and their school. School governors also need data in order that they are better placed in making reliable judgements on the performance of their schools.

82. We have seen good examples of this work at many schools and have had sight at a national level of examples such as the My School site used in Australia. We take the view that a single national IT platform is required in Wales to ensure that all stakeholders can access relevant data concerning the outcomes achieved by all schools and FEIs.

83. We were impressed by evidence from Tower Hamlets where diagnostic testing occurs at the age of six which allows supportive intervention to take place in order that illiteracy was reduced to 7–8 per cent by the age of 11. Some statistics suggest that in Wales close to 20 per cent of children have reading ages lower than required to access secondary education properly, and that boys in some areas do significantly worse than this. We do not appear to diagnose difficulties and take appropriate action at an early enough stage in a child's education. This cannot be acceptable and a failure of accountability and reliable data may be at the heart of this problem.

84. The need for there to be leadership at a professional and political level in the development of ways of working that recognize the challenges that have to be faced and the potential solutions that will allow us to move forward in a constructive way is beyond doubt. At a political level the WLGA through its leaders and spokespersons for education has demonstrated a clear and unambiguous position. There is a political mandate that underpins the development of regions as a source of providing a collaborative way forward in the task of improving outcomes at all levels; and a realisation that through economy of scale and partnership there is the opportunity of providing high-quality services and making effective and efficient use of resources in what are challenging financial times.

85. A partnership of politicians and educators working for the good of learners will be powerful in the coming years. As educators, we commend the leadership shown by LA Leaders and those with responsibility for education. There is an obvious enhanced role for senior politicians not only in their LA but also regionally in the coming years.



86. ADEW also meet at a national level and as such their role is considered in that context.

87. Consequently, the direction of travel indicates that there is a concerted move towards working in collaborative ways in regions that are significantly larger than individual LAs. This position is not unique to education, since similar initiatives may be seen in other areas of local government work.

88. The proposed Education (Wales) Measure in part acknowledges and supports the principal of working together for the common good, to use resources in a more effective and efficient manner, and to be able to do this in more productive and proactive ways in the future. The proposed Measure may be viewed in full on www.wales.gov.uk

89. Following the national referendum held on 3 March 2011, we will be able in future to create our own laws in Wales relating to education.

Chapter 7: National level

- 1.** During the course of our work we have had the privilege of discussing the range of issues under consideration with a wide group of people with a keen interest in helping us all move forward in a constructive way. We have consulted teachers, headteachers and principals of further education (FE) colleges, governors, parents, education officers, politicians, education specialists, teacher and other unions, civil service officials, learners, higher education, private business involved with training and many others with an interest in our work. It is difficult to summarise the views of everyone in a succinct way and we will include formal responses as an appendix, nevertheless some issues recur in many of our deliberations in the context of the national picture.
- 2.** There is agreement that nationally in terms of education we are entering a critical period in our development. There is demonstrable and quantifiable progress in some aspects of our work. However, we are seen to be lagging behind when outcomes are compared with those in the other countries within the UK. The UK is lagging behind in terms of outcomes when compared with other countries in the world. Not only are we falling behind other countries within the UK but we are going backwards in relative terms. Performance in terms of PISA is now worse than it was three years ago. If urgent steps are not taken, then we could well enter a downward spiral in terms of performance.
- 3.** Arguably a harsh judgement, but the hard evidence indicates that other countries within the UK are progressing at a faster rate than we are in Wales and internationally, certainly from analyses such as PISA, the UK is not doing particularly well in the context of direct comparisons.
- 4.** Words and phrases such as 'touchy feely,' cosy, not challenging, complacent, and 'good at avoiding hard or challenging decisions' have reoccurred regularly. It has been argued that we are not focusing enough attention on outcomes and performance at all levels of education. Moreover, as educators we have been challenged as to whether we make best use of the reliable comparative data that is now available in the relentless quest to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- 5.** Low expectation and low aspiration are issues that are deemed to have an impact on the challenges that face educators. In the worst cases this leads to complacency and the acceptance of poor standards, in the best it is seen as a challenge that must be addressed with vigour and determination. Rigour, clear goals, prioritisation is seen in best practice, excuses are made in the very worst cases.



6. In terms of school improvement, absolute clarity in the context of roles, responsibilities and accountability is seen in some LAs and partner schools, lack of understanding and confusion is seen in others. The socio-economic background of pupils is used as an excuse for inaction in some schools, and as a positive motivation in others.

7. Evidence is available from some schools demonstrating that they are performing significantly better than schools in similar circumstances, leading to legitimate questions such as 'if that school can achieve x outcomes, then why can't other schools do the same and what are they and the LA doing about it?'. Hard evidence indicating that if schools work in certain ways then significant improvements can occur in the outcomes achieved. This may be seen in the principles that underpin the SEF programme which are accepted and delivered effectively in some schools and some LAs. These principles and strategies are dismissed as 'it wouldn't work in our school' in many cases, without really looking in-depth at what is happening now in good schools, many of which are located in challenging areas.

8. Some schools work very hard indeed to engage with parents and the local community, this is not the universal picture. Governors play a full role in challenging and seeking explanation in some schools, in others this is not so.

9. There appears to be a reliance on the quality and motivation of an individual or groups of individuals in some schools but where this may be lacking there is the potential for a school to do badly. The clear understanding of the pivotal role of school leaders is accepted, as is the necessity for the continuing professional development (CPD) of all members of staff. This appears to be more aspirational than a reflection of reality in many circumstances. By definition we are a teaching profession and start on our journey at the level of initial teacher training, continuing training should be part and parcel of our development as professionals, not an add-on that is sometimes made available.

10. It is patently obvious that there is real concern as to how we deliver essential key skills such as literacy and how this should permeate the whole curriculum. To state the obvious it is not solely the responsibility of the teacher of English to deliver the skills associated with the development of literacy competences. Many teachers at Key Stage 2 complain about the skills that children have following completion of their work at the end of Foundation Phase, this is repeated at the Key Stage 2–3 interface and on down the line to the Key Stage 4–5–FE world of work interface. Everyone complains, it appears that no one 'sorts it out'.

11. There is an issue concerning the effective and efficient use of resources for the good of all pupils and their teachers. There are clear issues relating to spare capacity, size and location of schools, curriculum choice and opportunity at the 14–19 age range in a bilingual Wales. Good progress may be seen in certain parts of the country and learners benefit from the willingness of politicians and officers to take challenging decisions. Confusion also may be seen in other parts of the country.

12. Several national reviews have taken place during the first decade of this century. They include the Daugherty Report under the chairmanship of Professor Richard Daugherty, which considered the method and suitability of assessment at Key Stages 2 and 3 and published in 2004. The perception is that though some parts including the abolition of formal examination type testing were warmly welcomed and enacted, other recommendations were conveniently placed on the back burner and never firmly put in place. Some educators have argued that the abolition of formal testing of pupils at the end of Year 6 has both impacted on educational outcomes particularly in literacy and numeracy and weakened accountability for school performance. Moreover, it has been argued that in Wales, we welcome reports or parts of reports that we feel comfortable with, but perhaps conveniently forget that there are other issues that need tackling to deliver the full impact of a Review.

13. The National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) recommendations, delivered under the chairmanship of Professor Ken Reid which was charged with:

1. Exploring ways in which parents, children and young people and the community as a whole could be more effectively supported and engaged in the promotion of positive behaviour and attendance at school.
2. Identifying effective practice in promoting positive behaviour and attendance and ways in which this practice could be disseminated and embodied in schools and local authorities across Wales.
3. Identifying effective use of multi-agency partnerships in tackling issues of poor attendance and behaviour, including consideration of regional models.
4. Identifying potential new Wales – only legislative measures which could be sought under the Government of Wales Act 2006 that would assist in promoting discipline and attendance including specific consideration of the provision of education for excluded pupils.



14. Again, a range of issues that will have a direct impact on teaching, learning and outcomes but arguably a Review that has not resulted in distinct national policies that can be delivered and outcomes quantified.

15. The Minister reflected on this during his speech on 2 February making the proper point that truancy and bad behaviour are issues that need to be tackled vigorously and with rigour. Teachers throughout their careers need support in developing skills and strategies that will be of direct help in the classroom, in particular when working with learners who may be disaffected. To seek help is not an admission of failure on the part of any teacher, to pretend that occasionally that there are no issues that need to be tackled certainly is. Teachers may be exceptional in their work in the classroom, but if learners are continually absent, then by definition outcomes are compromised. There is a need to learn from best practice, to engage with pupils and their parents in a proactive way and to accept that this may well be challenging and time consuming, however the problem will not miraculously vanish if we sit back and do nothing.


16. The text of the Minister's speech may be found at:
www.wales.gov.uk/newsroom/educationandskills/2011/110202education/?lang=en

The current statistics with regard to pupil absences may be viewed on www.statswales.wales.gov.uk

17. Thirdly, the Webb Review, under the chairmanship of Professor Sir Adrian Webb. Here again, a thorough review of education from the age of 14 through to the world of work, with a range of recommendations concerning amongst others learning pathways 14–19, basic skills, Welsh-medium education, financial provision and funding, the role of consortia, and crucially quality. Significant recommendations, some enacted, some still unresolved. Sir Adrian Webb has contributed to our review and various issues are considered in more detail in the chapter on FE. He has advised us of research findings that will be published in due course.

18. Issues concerning the Foundation Phase and 14–19 Education are considered elsewhere.

19. Reviews relating to the Careers Service, additional learning needs (ALN) provision and others have also taken place during the past few years. Their content and recommendations are clear and well known and delivery mechanisms at national, regional and local levels currently continuing to develop. We see no need to revisit these areas of policy in our review.



20. The vast majority of those that we have talked to have said that we have now had enough initiatives and reviews and what we really need to do is to stop the talking and concentrate on the actions that we need to take to deliver high quality provision to and for our pupils and learners. We agree completely. Teachers need to know with some certainty what the agenda is going to be for the Term of an Assembly. It is a matter for whoever may be the Minister for Education following the National Assembly elections in May to make clear not only the direction of travel, but also in some detail, what the priorities are going to be and who is responsible for the delivery of those priorities. With responsibility goes accountability.

21. Frequently, more education is seen to be the answer to all the ills that may happen in the world. The response to all kinds of disasters is 'schools should do more to educate children' and all will be well. Perhaps the message now should be very simple, determine the priorities, keep to them and allow teachers to teach. Moreover, help teachers in their tasks with the proper balance of challenge and support.

22. The Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) has made a commitment to play a full role in leading and shaping improved attainment in Wales. Part of the ADEW commitment, supported by politicians at LA level is to increase funding directly delegated to schools to at least 85 per cent within the next four financial years. Arguably this should increase to 90 per cent over time. This freeing up of funding to frontline services will assist greatly in the drive for systemic change. This change must increase the accountability for improvement in education standards and well being at national, regional, local and provider levels. It must focus on outcomes rather than process. ADEW feels that in the past too much education reform has concentrated on process and has therefore failed to raise standards.

23. ADEW endorses the Minister's three priorities of Literacy, Numeracy and 'reducing the gap' in attainment and believes that Wales must avoid the crude application of top down targets that has limited reform efforts in other countries. In the spirit of 'intelligent accountability' and in order to 'raise the bar and narrow the gap'



ADEW is proposing three types of target in literacy and numeracy at the end of each key stage:

- a. **A floor target** – being an absolute standard below which no school, or any local authority in Wales will perform. This is to ensure that all children and young people will reach adequate levels of educational performance.
- b. **An aspirational target** – being the level at which children and young people will be performing when Wales becomes a world-class educational system. Schools will be required to demonstrate how and when they will reach this level of educational performance.
- c. **A progress target** – that relates to the progress of individual students. Schools will monitor the progress of each of their students to ensure that every child and young person makes one years of educational progress each calendar year.

24. Through ADEW all four regional consortia of LAs are committed to making economies of scale in the services they offer in order that they may better support and challenge schools to help them improve. Within a four part trajectory for consortium working which moves from totally separate local authority services through loose service collaborations to formal collaboration and to integrated services, all four consortia are committed that by the beginning of the 2012–13 financial year they will be in formal regional collaborations or will have totally integrated services.

25. We are advised that by September 2011 the four consortia will have introduced a far more rigorous degree of challenge and accountability for raising standards at all levels. The consortia will band all their schools on a traffic light system. They will harmonise and agree with schools the categories of intervention for schools causing concern. This system will be transparent with strict lines of accountability for setting in place significant improvement on an agreed timescale. Intervention will be strictly targeted at need.

26. The regional consortia will carry out a similar process of challenge if one of their constituent local authorities should fall behind in pupil attainment.

27. Over the next 18 months there will be a consortia-based focus on improving standards of literacy at Key Stages 2 and 3. This will involve the forensic analysis of school data so as to focus challenge and support where most needed. It will also involve focused moderation of standards for these key stages.

28. Within each regional consortium the constituent authorities will focus initially on six schools which consistently under-perform at the end of Key Stage 2 assessments, setting targets for improvement for 6 months' time and for 18 months' time. Nationally this means there will be a consistent degree of challenge and support for under-performing schools.


29. Consortia will intensify their work to raise standards at Key Stage 3, focusing on, amongst other priorities, boys' reading and writing, fostering independent learning and providing support to any constituent local authority in a consortium that significantly and consistently performs at a lower level than the others. Ongoing interventions in individual schools at Key Stage 3 will be sharpened.

30. The WLGA Improvement Board will set up a 'kite mark' process for successful literacy schemes and practices and promote these strategies through a good practice website where individual schools, consortia and the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) can share practice which has been proven to raise standards.

31. Progress on all the above points will be monitored by ADEW directors. Each director will report on progress towards these targets as part of a standing agenda item in their meetings with headteachers. Progress reports will be a standing agenda item in all ADEW directors' meetings, ADEW meetings with local authority cabinet members and in the programmed meetings between ADEW and the DCELLS Senior Management Team. We take the view that there should be termly meetings between representatives of ADEW, DCELLS senior management team and the Minister and that the Chief Inspector of Schools should be invited to join such discussions periodically to ensure that an independent perspective may be offered in considering progress.

32. Estyn also has a national remit. Properly, through rigorous inspection, we are given evidence of areas where we are making good progress and indeed where we need to improve. We have noted elsewhere that the Annual Report may be accessed online.

33. Estyn is now operating under a set of new inspection arrangements and though this is not the vehicle to look in detail at those changes it is quite clear that there is now a direct link between government policies and the quality of delivery. Schools, colleges and LAs are charged with establishing a rigorous self-evaluation framework which means that continuous thorough review is part and parcel of the ongoing work and that robust and clear mechanisms



and policies are in place that can be tested and evaluated independently by inspection. The quality of leadership, challenge and support, including in a school by Governors, will be properly scrutinised and the ultimate test is the impact that may be seen on the quality of provision to the learners.

34. The new way of working within Estyn has been welcomed and the move away from the perceived tick box methodology seen in the most recent cycles of inspection a positive step on the way forward. The involvement of current serving teachers and lecturers as part of Estyn inspection teams is seen as a positive also and is to the benefit of the individual, the school and college and Estyn. That Estyn will publish reports detailing good practice which has been observed must be a step in the right direction. The knowledge that may be secured in this way can be used productively for the benefit of all.

35. Anecdotal evidence from some early inspections in their new format suggests that Estyn will return in up to 25 per cent of schools inspected to conduct follow up work which may identify excellent practice or issues that are a cause for concern. This signals a distinct shift in outlook from that seen in inspections conducted under the former framework and is perceived to be most appropriate. Governors too have found the new methodology in approach a welcome change and realistic challenge in the context of discharging their responsibilities on behalf of pupils.

36. On its website DCELLS identifies its role as follows:

“The Department aims to improve children’s services, education and training provision to secure better outcomes for learners, business, and employers as set out in our strategic document, ‘The Learning Country’.”

The challenges facing a national department such as this are wide and varied. It is a matter of record that significant changes have occurred over the past decade or so, most certainly over the past five years. The new Director General and his two Directors have the task of developing the department in a time of significant change and challenge. There is an ongoing restructuring exercise in place and it would be improper to comment unduly on the progress that is being made.


37. The perception of stakeholders is that there is a need for change, that there are sections within DCELLS which operate independently without understanding the full picture. Be that as it may, the challenge now for all of us working for the good of education in Wales is to critically look at what we do, and cooperate as best we can to create a system and structure for education in the future that learns from past mistakes and achievements and moves forward constructively.

38. DCELLS collects significant amount of data. Other sections of the National Assembly of Wales also collect data. The view is that this whole area of work needs to be rationalised and clarified. Schools and colleges argue that information is sent to a variety of sources be that DCELLS, LA or elsewhere in local or national government. Frequently the data is collated in marginally different ways for the benefit of those requiring the data. The firm view is that this is both wasteful in terms of time and money and needs to be resolved with some urgency.

39. DCELLS also administers and controls certain streams of money for specific purposes. Grants are made available, sometimes for very small sums of money and here again the challenge is to rationalise the systems within the financial regulations and requirement for probity. In some instances a bidding structure might be a requirement but the structures appear to be complex and sometimes opaque. There is also a need for clarity in the schools sector as to what needs to go to LA and what could go directly to schools.

40. It has been argued that there is a lack of knowledge in DCELLS relating to a real understanding of what happens at LA level, let alone at school level and there may be a lack of engagement and effective communication with the teaching profession. That does not come as a surprise since out of 710 employees only two permanent employees have experience of working in schools, colleges or LAs during the past five years. Nevertheless, it is correct to report that colleagues with direct and immediate experience of teaching are seconded to join various groups working within DCELLS on specific projects. However the process of identifying appropriate colleagues appears to be somewhat haphazard. It is also fair to record that practitioners are also co-opted to various working parties that help in developing policy and play a full part in all discussions.

41. DCELLS is properly charged with developing policy on behalf of the Minister with responsibility for Education. This is a fundamental responsibility but there needs to be clarity within DCELLS with regard to roles and responsibilities in the context of leading or facilitating developments.



42. Currently it is perfectly clear that DCELLS does not have the capacity to properly hold LAs and others to account for their performance. LAs, FE colleges and others need to be held to account. By definition they are ultimately accountable to the Minister for Education. It follows therefore that DCELLS is the appropriate vehicle to deliver this requirement and that to do so a properly constructed and resourced Standards Unit needs to be developed from within current financial resources. This needs to be staffed in an appropriate way so that the challenge is credible and robust and encompasses all providers of education.

43. A recurring theme in our discussions has been the necessity to have a clear structure that can identify a concerted programme for CPD from Initial training through to National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and beyond.

44. Moreover in the context of the vast majority of stakeholders, a significant issue has been that of 'recent and relevant' experience, be that in the context of advisory teams, Estyn inspectors, HE education departments and others. The pace and nature of change and the management of this in schools and colleges is quite intense and to be away from direct experience for a prolonged period of time can have an impact on real understanding. Though many professionals have the privilege of visiting classrooms in discharging their duties and observing the processes of teaching and learning, there remains a difference in seeing what is taking place and actually participating actively in the process.

45. The initiatives taken by Estyn, HE education departments, advisory services and DCELLS to bring serving practitioners in to their teams are welcomed by all. However, it has been argued that having been away from daily contact with learners for a significant period of time, six years or so, there should be the opportunity for all practitioners to return to the front line for at least a full term, preferably an academic year, to refresh and renew their skills.

46. It is beyond the scope of this review to make this a formal recommendation, rather we leave it to others to explain and justify to stakeholders why this process may not take place. If we are to move forward together as educators, then it is essential that our credibility as practitioners must be beyond reproach.

Chapter 8: Finance

- 1.** The budget for the 2011–12 financial years has been approved and published. It may be viewed in full on www.cymru.gov.uk/about/budget/finalbudget2011/?lang=
- 2.** The budgetary position is challenging both in terms of revenue and capital. The DCELLS revenue budget is increased by £5.9 million in 2011–12, followed by an increase of £3.6 million in 2012–13 and £23 million for 2013–14. Capital funding for 2011–12 is £173.4 million and this is reduced by £12.1 million in 2012–13 and by £17.5 million in 2013–14.
- 3.** Over the period to 2015 there are increases in the budgets that service the area of Children, Young People and School Effectiveness, and in the budget for Qualifications, Curriculum and Learning Improvement. It is reassuring to note that there is an annual increase in the indicative budget for Flying Start to £41.644 million in 2013–2014. This is vital provision that can and does make a significant difference for children and their families throughout Wales. Moreover, £61 million has been included over three years in the local authorities revenue support grant to meet a commitment by the First Minister. This delivers a 1 per cent protection compared to the reduction in the Assembly's Block Grant and will be monitored through annual returns from local authorities.
- 4.** The additional £61 million is to go to the very front line of teaching and learning, specifically to schools. The Minister has made it clear that the money will be tracked and that he is prepared to intervene if evidence emerges which demonstrates that the money has been top sliced or diverted. This amounts to an additional figure approaching £132 per FTE pupil.
- 5.** Financial matters relating to FE are considered in the appropriate chapter.
- 6.** Comment has been made elsewhere concerning the independent review of the cost of administering the education system in Wales, the PWC Review. Subsequently, the Minister established the Front Line Resources Review Team charged specifically with considering all the options that might be available to begin the process of moving money from back room functions to the front line by working in more efficient and cooperative ways.
- 7.** The review is not just about finding efficiencies, but about delivering the best possible education service to our learners trimming some of the unnecessary bureaucratic burdens in the system. The review aims to be far reaching and is leading to changes.



in schools, local authorities, further and higher education providers and work-based learning providers. PwC estimated that a cost shift in the range of around £104 million to £192 million should be possible.

8. A plan has been established to deliver this cost shift. Its delivery is being overseen by a board chaired by the Minister which meets on a monthly basis. The plan includes a range of actions, including:

- the roll out, according to regional delivery plans, of the national model for local authority consortia
- reconfiguration of support services for HE and FE institutions to make the most of opportunities to share services and collaborate
- reducing the numbers of separate grant schemes
- a range of ICT projects including working towards a single learner platform and reduced more coherent data requirements.

9. The Group has considered the plan, supports its content, and welcomes the progress made to date, which is very much in line with the recommendations in this report. Nevertheless we consider that the pace of change could be accelerated in some areas and in particular draw attention to the mixed progress to date on moving towards the ADEW local authority consortia model for school improvement.

10. Clearly therefore there is a significant task for this team to engage with over the coming period so that opportunities can be identified, potential cost savings determined and published so that responsible targets may be clarified and placed in the public domain.

11. PwC put forward their hypotheses in the context of reconfiguring how support may be delivered or by reducing complexity in the system and identified potential system changes that are not addressed directly since they are beyond the scope of the analysis. These included:

1. Tertiary education – the removal of competition between FE and schools for places by consistent consolidation of 16–19 education.
2. Local authority reorganisation – the reduction in the number of local democratic mandates across Wales.
3. Reorganisation of further and higher education – the reconfiguration of institutions to develop research specialisms more clearly, to alter the relationship between FE and HE and to reduce overall numbers in institutions.

12. HE is beyond the scope of our work, but to put it bluntly, the other issues identified will not go away. They will impact on the totality of the resources that are available to education and the effective and efficient use that is currently made of these resources in the future.

13. There has been a good deal of speculation as to potential savings that might be made, for example if a LA worked more closely in providing services across a region. These could include services such as those that challenge and support schools at the front line or those that service the needs of schools be that in terms of HR, payroll, legal services and many others.


14. Various figures for potential savings have been promulgated during discussions ranging from 10 per cent – 20 per cent – 30 per cent. Should the figure identified in the PWC Review relating to the retained spend of LA education departments be taken as accurate at the time of publishing the Review, specifically £806.5 million then the potential savings over time in round figures would be in the region of £80.65 million, £161.3 million and £240.95 million. Taking the 20 per cent figure as an example that equates roughly to around £348 per full-time equivalent (FTE) pupil in Wales.

15. By adding this figure to the additional 1 per cent uplift already identified, then an additional sum close to £480 per FTE pupil may be seen. Currently England spends a figure of £412 more on pupils excluding London than we do in Wales.

16. On the one hand it can be argued that it is idle to speculate on possible savings on the other it may be important to point out the potential. Clearly, there is a need for a thorough analysis of what might be possible within the time frame of a full Assembly term.

17. A further potential saving of £102 million has been promulgated by funding schools directly from the Assembly and therefore bypassing local authorities completely. This is a significant figure in the region of £220 per FTE pupil.

18. However, though the figure of £102 million can be identified from various statistics, what is unclear is the costs needed to set up a system that might deliver money to schools directly, the potential impact of this also on council tax, since LAs fund education currently in different ways to meet the identified needs of their own counties, and the potential redundancy costs. Arguably the only way of making a saving of this kind is to dismiss somewhere in the region




of 2,500 LA staff. Potentially, the redundancy costs alone spread over a period of years would drive down the money available to schools, not increase the sum. However, this possibility is worthy of consideration over the next few years, so that all the implications may be made clear.

19. LAs through the work that has continued over the past three years, in particular working as consortia have begun to look at the range of issues and the potential of both saving money and providing very high-quality services. Issues relating to delegation generally and the percentage of money delegated to schools remain to be properly resolved in many parts of Wales. The percentage delegation per LA is noted elsewhere.

20. What has come to be abundantly clear is that LAs attempt to resolve issues of delegation in significantly different ways. In some LAs there is a clear understanding that issues of delegation are resolved by meaningful discussion between all the partners. It is a matter that LAs resolve with schools not something that is done to schools. Evidence suggests that some view the LAs as a partnership of schools, officers and elected members working for the good of the learners in their care. In those instances, it is not possible to be partners only when it suits. Tackling challenges together with everything that is implied and with clear lines of responsibility and accountability in place is the way of working. The culture of 'us and them' may be perceived in some other parts of Wales.

21. The leading role of the WLGA in taking a stance on the percentage of the education budget that will be delegated in the coming years is welcomed. However, issues appear to be present that need to be resolved.

22. On the one hand it is of concern that some LAs in order to demonstrate that there is an increase in the rate of delegation appear to be in a hurry to continue the process without really analysing the problems and challenges that will follow in individual schools. On the other hand it appears that some schools are accepting the delegated finance for various services for the sake of increasing the rate of delegation in the short term, without considering the long term consequences.




23. It appears that in some LAs where, for example HR services have been brought under a corporate umbrella, schools currently are having significant difficulties in accessing colleagues with the specialist knowledge that might be required. This has emerged now so many times that it ceases to be a coincidence. There appears to be a lack of understanding about the quality element required in any service level agreement (SLA). Bluntly, if schools need expert advice on issues that are specific, for example relating to conditions of service in education, then they are the client and if the service is not provided with sufficient quality, schools may opt to use their SLA money with a different provider. Schools are the clients, the LA should provide the high quality service that is required.

24. As regions develop, these issues need to be resolved carefully. Moreover, there needs to be clarity and consistency as to how most aspects of costing relating to education need to be demonstrated. A recommendation in respect of Section 52 will be made so that there is greater clarity and transparency in this aspect of work.

25. It may be prudent to take the impending financial year to look in more detail at the issue of financial delegation in the round. Everyone is of the view that progress needs to be made and in a timely manner, however there might be a benefit if schools and LAs spend a little more time in a consistent way across all LAs in Wales to identify a sound and sensible way forward. Primary schools may opt to move in different ways to secondary schools in the context of some services, in others there may well be a commonality of approach. If regional consortia are to provide high-quality services then significant discussions need to take place between all the partners involved. There needs to be an orderly transition based on the needs of the clients, specifically the schools, and if the price of securing this may be an understanding that it may take until the 2012–13 financial year to fully progress on all fronts, it may well be time well spent. This is not an argument for a delay. It is necessary to continue with this dialogue immediately

26. Matters relating to the effective and efficient use of resources are noted elsewhere, suffice it to say that there is an urgent need to tackle the issue of surplus places. Moreover there is a real need to tackle the issues that are concerned with providing a system and structure that offers choice for learners post-16 and that maximises the opportunities for cooperation, not competition between schools and FE colleges. Good practice can be identified in many places. Some examples are noted in the appendix. In some areas, competition is the norm and to pretend otherwise is foolhardy. If resources are to be used to best effect, then this matter also must be resolved with some urgency.



27. The declining capital budget is a further impetus for dealing with surplus places, size and location of schools and the 16–19 continuums in a more coherent way. A regional perspective may well offer some solutions for example in the provision of Welsh-medium education. Other solutions can be sought within a specific geographic area and here we note examples seen in the southern part of Pembrokeshire. The best way forward for some parts of northern Pembrokeshire might well be found in collaborating with areas of Ceredigion for reasons of language and geography. There is no one size fits all solution. There will be no solution as long as the pretence remains that all is well. Educators and politicians need to resolve these issues.

28. There is a real need for a thorough review of post-16 funding and issues of school size and spare capacity need to be considered in the process.

29. It has also been argued that we need a national formula that identifies the minimum amount of money that is needed to fund an individual child. Clearly, this is a complex area and would include analysing factors such as school and class size, curriculum choice and provision, the quality of the school environment, transportation costs, individual costs for children for example with specific ALN, current provision made by individual LAs, the impact of council tax, and many more. Our concern is that the minimum would soon become the maximum in terms of provision and whether in the long term that might be to the benefit of all learners. Nevertheless, there may well be good reason to scope this matter during the next assembly term, so at the very least all the relevant factors are identified and understood by all stakeholders.


30. Issues are also perceived in the context of difficulties that arise in securing various financial resources from DCELLS. Schools, LAs and FE colleges talk of a bidding culture. It is clearly understood that some specific funding is required for a particular designated purpose. The funding of the Foundation Phase is one such example. Moreover, funding for upcoming initiatives such as the delivery of the literacy programmes has already been identified and designated. The perception is that schools and colleges and sometimes LAs are all unclear as to the nature of some of the funding streams that may be available, frequently spend significant amounts of time bidding for relatively small amounts of money and have no real knowledge whether the various pots of money are sustainable.

31. The Minister in a speech made on 2 February argued that changes were needed in the way that DCELLS works so that a coherent approach to all financial matters is the norm. This argument is sound and it may well be appropriate for the Director General to work with stakeholders and the central team to ensure that there is clarity in financial streams, consistency in approach, bidding processes reduced to the bare minimum, and clear lines of accountability going alongside the shift of money into the RSG or directly to LAs, schools or colleges. The text of the Minister's speech may be found at www.wales.gov.uk/newsroom/educationandskills/2011/110202education/?lang=en

32. It is also relevant to note for example in an area such as the CPD of teachers, there appear to be several streams of money that can be used to provide help for teachers. In addition to resources that are provided by DCELLS and LAs, further resources for example finance for Athrawon Bro comes from both the LA and currently the Welsh Language Board. Some money is secured from the WJEC for other purposes and resources made available from the GTC. As we move to the future, there is an obvious need to provide a joined up solution and clear plan of action between those that have the resources to ensure that duplication does not occur and that plans may be drawn up with some certainty. Put simply, 'who does what and where' needs to be known well in advance.

33. This issue is also relevant in the context of teaching and learning materials. Schools, LAs, DCELLS, WJEC and others play a part in providing and distributing packages of this kind. In a bilingual country the size of Wales there is an obvious need to resolve matters so that duplication and sometimes competition is replaced by a structured plan for cooperation to improve quality and consistency of application.

34. In this context also, the work currently ongoing in Torfaen creating an environment for technology-rich learning is interesting in its own right and provides opportunities for learners and their teachers to access high-quality materials in a constructive way. Moreover in the context of working with other services, for example the Police, there are further opportunities to make effective and efficient use of resources through the economy of scale achieved by partnership working. The learning platforms being developed by the Swansea LA also offers significant opportunities as we look to the future.



35. The clear message is that we have the capacity to deliver high-quality teaching and learning materials in Wales and to make cost savings that may be identified and are best used at the very front line of teaching and learning. A further message is that we need to coordinate developments in a constructive and coherent way to minimise duplication and maximise cost savings and high-quality provision of teaching and learning materials that can be used throughout Wales.

36. A final key issue relating to finance that has emerged consistently is the concern that the notion of school budgets being 'protected' could lead to the temptation for other budget headings that serve education at LA level to be reduced as a consequence. Clearly, at local level the elected members are entitled to make decisions that best reflect the needs of their own communities and are answerable at the ballot box for their decisions. That is not in dispute. At national level, the current First Minister and the Welsh Assembly Government resolved to make education a priority. We applaud that decision.

37. Whilst education remains a national priority it brings with it an expectation that this is reflected in a budget and that the budget at LA level also responds to this. It may be pure coincidence that in analysing LA budgets the perception is that if another LA service has failed or is in difficulty, then money is frequently channelled from the education budget into that service and subsequently deployed to the detriment of learners. Since it is argued elsewhere that there is a need for a Standards Unit, then it follows that this Unit needs to consider annually any shift in education spending and determine whether this impacts on outcomes for the learner.

38. The current Minister has argued that action will be taken for example if the new money designated directly for the classroom does not reach its intended place. It follows therefore that if the Standards Unit is of the view that outcomes for pupils are placed at risk by a reduction in the education budget, there would be a requirement for an immediate Estyn review of the LA and schools. By definition if a LA fails then as with a school, a Board may be put in place to oversee the work or indeed in certain cases the LA could be absorbed by another high performing LA. It is not anticipated that this will be a major issue in Wales but potentially a Minister might need to consider issues such as the hypothecation of the education budget.

Appendix 1: Summary table of recommendations

Note: although the lead action for many recommendations is here ascribed to national and regional organisations and local authorities, most will have an impact on schools, colleges and other providers.

	Recommendation	Who?				Action Date
		National	Regional	Local authority	Provider	
R1	Establish a mission for education in Wales.	•				June 2011
R2	DCELLS reorganisation.	•				September 2011
R3	Establish a national education and training standards unit.	•				November 2011
R4	DCELLS to coordinate policy and strategy development.	•				September 2011
R5	Develop a single national IT data platform.	•				January 2013
R6	Develop a single database combining the data fields for PLASC and LLWR.	•				January 2013
R7	Target for school surplus places to be set at 10 per cent across Wales.	•				Plans by December 2012
R8	Review funding of the 16 to 19 age range.	•				December 2012
R9	Develop a single method of assessing literacy and numeracy in the post-16 environment.	•				August 2012
R10	Publish guidance on inclusion of suitable work experience in learning provision.	•				December 2011
R11	Further reduction in the number of separate further education colleges.	•			•	August 2013
R12	Assign leadership role to consortia in key areas.		•			September 2011



	Recommendation	Who?				Action Date
		National	Regional	Local authority	Provider	
R13	Formalise regional consortia underpinned by local government political mandate.		•			September 2011
R14	Select a consortium director for each region.		•			November 2012
R15	Establish regional consortia-wide school improvement services.		•			April 2012
R16	Established structures of accountability and performance the consortia.		•			April 2012
R17	Establish a coordinated multiagency approach to support children and families.		•			April 2012
R18	Appropriate intervention and support strategies to be put in place for children with additional learning needs.		•			April 2012
R19	Establish an approach to improving boys' reading and writing and promoting achievement of pupils receiving free school meals.		•			April 2012
R20	Set improvement targets for underperforming schools.		•			September 2011
R21	Establish clearly differentiated appropriately challenging schemes of work.		•			September 2011
R22	No unsatisfactory schools by 2012, no schools unsatisfactory or adequate by 2015.		•			September 2012, September 2015

	Recommendation	Who?				Action Date
		National	Regional	Local authority	Provider	
R23	Identify financial savings through regional collaboration and divert to the front line.		•			June 2011
R24	Establish national template for section 52 reports.	•				Financial year 2012–13
R25	Funding to go directly to those delivering services a presumption of no bidding processes for revenue funding.	•	•	•		Academic Year 2012/13
R26	CPD budgets to be delegated to school bank accounts.	•	•	•		April 2012
R27	Establish a national CPD plan.	•				April 2012
R28	Literacy and numeracy tests at the beginning of Years 2 and 5.	•				September 2011
R29	Statutory baseline and end of Key Stage 2/3 assessment moderation exercises.		•	•		From September 2011
R30	Compulsory training of governors and clerks.	•	•			June 2011
R31	Standard sets of performance data for governors.	•	•			June 2011
R32	Progress report to be published.	•				Annual
R33	Review need for further structural change.	•				Autumn 2013



Appendix 2: Written statement by the Welsh Assembly Government

Title: Establishment of a Structure of Education Services Task and Finish Group

Date: 14 October 2010

By: Leighton Andrews, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

On the 18th of May 2010 I published a report from PricewaterhouseCoopers on the cost of administering education across Wales. This report has received widespread support and acceptance across all education sectors.


To provide pace and direction to the implementation of the report's recommendations I have established a Front Line Resources Review Programme Board, which I Chair, and a number of working groups to explore and take forward specific areas of opportunity. These groups are drawing on their own expertise and on the responses and suggestions I have received from heads of institutions and their representative bodies. The groups are already making good progress in identifying a programme of transformation to maximise the level of resource available for front line service delivery.

My objective is to ensure that the education system is structured in a way that will deliver sustained improvement learner attainment across Wales. Driving more resource to the front line is critical to that. The Front Line Resources Review will support performance improvement across the education system in Wales and help embed collaborative models of service planning and delivery.

This Review complements the work of the Efficiency and Innovation Board which aims to catalyse innovation and promote collaboration across public services in Wales. I will say more about the progress we are making at the next Public Services Summit, on 25 November.

The conclusions of the Independent Commission on Social Services, which is due to report to the Deputy Minister for Social Services in November, will also be of interest, particularly those relating to collaboration between social services and other areas, such as services for children and young people.

Estyn have recently written to me highlighting many existing examples of collaboration across local authorities. They suggest that authorities are not reluctant to work together where they can see the benefits of doing so. However, they have also stated that there is



presently too much variation in the quality of the arrangements for collaborative working and that systems to challenge and evaluate the impact of such arrangements on standards and quality of education for learners are immature.

The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government announced on 28 September that he would be commissioning an independent study aimed at providing a clearer framework for the delivery of services currently provided by each of the 22 local authorities. I want to build on this and take it forward rapidly for education service provision but on a wider basis than just local authority services. It is vital that we join our work together in order to avoid duplication of effort and to keep our approach simple.

I have discussed with the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government how we can best do this and meet my aims and objectives. We have concluded that the right solution will be for me to consider the organisation of education within local authorities, as part of the whole education sector in parallel with my Front Line Resources Review.


To achieve this I have established a task and finish group to consider the case for change to existing service structures (excluding higher education). This group will be able to draw on the expertise and experience of the Social Justice and Local Government Minister's reference group.

The task and finish group will take a long-term, whole system view on whether education structures enable and support the delivery of best value services to the citizens of Wales. It will run in parallel with the Front Line Resources Review programme, linking into its work and providing an external challenge element to this work.

The group will consider the case for change to existing service structures and governance arrangements and, in particular which education services:

- a) should be provided at national level
- b) should be provided at Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) regional consortia level
- c) should be provided at local authority level
- d) should be devolved to providers, including schools or clusters of schools
- e) should be provided on another organisational basis.

The group will also identify the implications for funding, planning and governance of services arising from the above points.



The membership of the group will consist of five independent sector experts and I am pleased to announce that the following people have agreed to undertake this important task:

Chair

Viv Thomas (First Headteacher of Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr and first Head teacher of Birchgrove Comprehensive School. Former Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning at Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and a consultant on the Strategic Review of Education in Northern Ireland published in December 2006, Chaired by Sir George Bain).

Group members

Wil Edmunds (Former Principal at Deeside College and former Chair of ACCAC).

Bethan Guilfoyle (Headteacher, Treorchy Comprehensive School).

Dr Tim Williams (Managing Director within Navigant Consulting's Public Services practice).

Brett Pugh (Chief Education Officer of Newport City Council).

The group will report its findings to me by 31 January 2011 and I look forward to hearing its recommendations on the sector's fitness to respond, at pace, to the challenges which face education in the coming years.



Appendix 3: Letter from the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to education stakeholders in Wales (19 November 2010)

Heads of institutions and representative bodies

19 November 2010

Structure of Education Services Task and Finish Group

I am writing to you as Chair of the Structure of Education Services Task and Finish Group to give you some background information about the review and the approach we will be taking and to ask you for your views.

The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning (the Minister) published a report entitled the 'Review of the cost of administering the education system in Wales – Phase 1' on 18 May 2010. This report suggests 10 areas (hypotheses) to pursue in order to achieve a shift of funding from support functions to service delivery: the education 'front line'. These hypotheses are being taken forward through the Front Line Resources Review (FLRR) which is now well under way. Further information on the review can be found at:

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/educationreview2010/?lang=en

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/educationreview2010/?skip=1&lang=cy

The Minister recently announced the establishment of a Structure of Education Services Task and Finish Group which will work in parallel with the FLRR, linking with it and drawing heavily upon the activity which is already under way. The full membership of the Task and Finish Group is as follows:

Chair

Viv Thomas (First headteacher of Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr and first headteacher of Birchgrove Comprehensive School. Former Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning at Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and a consultant on the Strategic Review of Education in Northern Ireland published in December 2006, Chaired by Sir George Bain).

The structure of education services in Wales

March 2011



Group members

Wil Edmunds (Former Principal at Deeside College and former Chair of ACCAC).

Bethan Guilfoyle (Headteacher, Treorchy Comprehensive School).

Dr Tim Williams (Managing Director within Navigant Consulting's Public Services practice).

Brett Pugh (Chief Education Officer at Newport City Council. Previous experience includes 10 years as a primary school teacher).

The Minister's full statement announcing the review can be seen at:


www.wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2010/101014tfg/?lang=en

www.wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2010/101014tfg/?skip=1&lang=cy

The Minister has asked us to consider the case for change to existing education service structures (excluding higher education) across Wales. We will be taking a long-term, whole system view on whether current education structures enable and support the delivery of best value education services. We are remitted to consider the case for change to existing service structures and governance arrangements. Specifically which education services:

- f) should be provided at national level
- g) should be provided at regional consortia level
- h) should be provided at local authority level
- i) should be devolved to providers, including schools or clusters of schools
- j) should be provided on another organisational basis.

We will also identify the implications for funding, planning and governance of services arising from the above points. We were asked initially to report our conclusions to the Minister by the end of January 2011 but due to the complex nature of the task and the possible long term consequences of our recommendations, the Minister has extended our reporting deadline to the week commencing 7 March. This will give us important additional time to consult more fully.



The Minister has been very forthright in some of his comments with regards to educational issues in Wales. In that spirit therefore and so that there is no ambiguity, without prejudicing the recommendations that we may make, I am fully aware that it is the quality of teaching and learning that occurs in classrooms and lecture theatres that is of paramount importance.


We will be placing the future of our children and young people, their teachers and lecturers firmly at the forefront of our deliberations. It is not our intention to try and save money but rather to make recommendations to deploy current and future resources in an effective and efficient way that will both benefit those that are working at the very front line of teaching and the children and young people in their care. The structures that we have for delivering high quality education in Wales should be fit for that purpose.

Clearly, we will be reviewing the current structures that are in place and coming to a view as to whether they are effective, efficient and fit for purpose. We take the view that there is currently excellent work to be seen in schools and colleges in Wales. However, we believe that educational outcomes in Wales can and must be improved. We will review the role that Regional Consortia, Estyn, LA Educational Advisory Services, higher education and others play in the process of helping teachers to improving performance. The schools/FE interface in 14–19 Consortia will also be reviewed and issues relating to transparency and accountability across the board analysed.

Following the information contained in the 'Review of the cost of administering the education system in Wales', we will analyse the cost effectiveness of systems, structures and outcomes in Wales in addition to reviewing the overhead costs taken by DCELLS, LAs and others. We will need to consider the time scale that may be necessary to manage any changes that may occur.

Data of various kinds relating to pupil performance, the provision of resources and demographic trends in Wales will be collected and placed in the context of similar data available for the other countries within the UK and the wider world. This information may allow us, educators, parents and politicians make informed and reliable judgements.

The Group will be coordinating its work with the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government's recently announced independent study on the delivery of services currently provided by local authorities in Wales. This has been agreed by both Ministers.



We are therefore inviting you to comment on the services identified by the Minister, the implications of the issues raised in his Written Statement of 14 October 2010, and the additional matters that we raise in this letter. We do not wish to be prescriptive in devising a format for your response; this is best left to your judgement.

However, since it is possible that the Minister may wish to publish some or all of the responses, we invite you to limit the length of your responses, or provide an executive summary of no more than four pages of A4 paper.

I should be grateful for your response by 31 December 2010, please send it to: educationreview@wales.gsi.gov.uk. It is our intention to invite as wide a range of stakeholders as possible to face to face discussions. We fully intend to seek meetings with Teacher Unions, National representatives of Governors and Parents, the WLGA and others and intend to hold these meetings in December and January.

I know you are frequently called upon to respond to various matters concerning education and that it is difficult to find time to respond. This review may lead to recommendations for fundamental changes to the structure of education in Wales and your engagement and views will be of vital importance if we are to make recommendations that will deliver the best possible outcomes for our learners.

I very much look forward to hearing your views in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Vivian Thomas

Chair of the Structure of Education Services Task and Finish Group



Appendix 4: Contributors to our report

Evidence sessions

The following organisations and individuals participated in our evidence sessions from December 2010 to February 2011.

Organisations

Association of Directors of Education in Wales

Bryan Jeffreys, Director of Education, Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council

Mike Keating, Lead Director, Central South Consortium

Careers Wales

Trina Neilson, Chief Executive Careers Wales Gwent

ColegauCymru/CollegesWales

Bryn Davies, Principal, Ystrad Mynach College

John Graystone, Chief Executive

Governors Wales

Mike Barker, Development Officer

Jane Morris, Director

Hugh Pattrick, Vice Chair

National Training Federation Wales

Arwyn Watkins, Managing Director Cambrian Training Company

South West Wales Regional Learning Partnership

Dave Gilbert, Director of Regeneration, Carmarthenshire County Borough Council

Barry Liles, Principal, Coleg Sir Gar

Sara Harvey, Regional Coordinator, South West Wales

Welsh Assembly Government Department of Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Simon Brindle, Deputy Director, Schools Management and Effectiveness

Andrew Clark, Acting Deputy Director, Higher and Further Education Policy

Owen Evans, Director, Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning

Lynne Hamilton, Director, Business Improvement and Resource Investment

Gwen Kohler, Head of Corporate Planning, Performance and Financial Management

Emyr Roberts, Director General

Chris Tweedale, Director, Children, Young People and School Effectiveness

Steve Vincent, School Effectiveness Programme Manager



Welsh Assembly Government Statistical Directorate

Scott Clifford, Senior Statistical Officer

Stephen Hughes, Section Head

Glyn Jones, Acting Head of Statistical Services

Welsh Local Government Association

David Hopkins

Chris Llewelyn, Deputy Chief Executive

Individuals

Dr Kevan Collins, Chief Executive Officer, Tower Hamlets Borough Council

Professor David Egan

Professor Alma Harries

Rob Humphreys, Director of the Open University in Wales and Chair of the Review of Governance of Further Education Institutions

Professor David Hopkins

Professor David Reynolds

Unions

Some group members also held formal meetings with representatives from the following teaching unions:

Association of School and College Leaders

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

NASUWT Cymru – The Teachers Union

NAHT Cymru – The Association of all School Leaders

National Union of Teachers

Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru

Individual meetings

Members of the review group also met the following individuals as part of our evidence gathering process.

Helen Arthur (Deputy Director, Learning Improvement and Professional Development, DCELLS)

Cllr David Atwell (Cabinet Member for Young People's Services, Newport City Council)

Professor Sir George Bain

Jim Bennett (Coleg Gwent)

Nick Bennett (Gower College)

Andrew Clark (Acting Deputy Director, Higher and Further Education Policy)

Paul Croke (Yale College, Wrexham)
 Mark Dacey (Chief Executive, NPT College)
 Professor Richard Daugherty (Oxford University)
 Katherine Davies (Headteacher, Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr)
 Huw Davies (Headteacher, Olchfa School Swansea)
 DCELLS DG and Group Directors – Emyr Roberts, Chris Tweedale and Owen Evans
 Philip Dixon (ATL Cymru)
 Jayne Dulson (National Deaf Children's Society Cymru)
 Elaine Edwards (UCAC)
 Dr. Haydn Edwards (Chair of the Careers Review *Future Ambitions – Developing careers services in Wales* (November 2010)
 David Evans (NUT Wales)
 Dafydd Evans (Coleg Menai)
 Eifion Evans (Director of Education, Ceredigion)
 Huw Evans (Coleg Llandrillo)
 Michael Gibbon (Headteacher, Sandfields Comprehensive School, NPT)
 Dr. John Graystone (Colegau Cymru)
 Lesley Griffiths AM (Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills, Welsh Assembly Government)
 Wynne Griffiths (Headteacher, Rhydyfro Primary School, NPT)
 Martin Grimes. (Headteacher, Dyffryn Comprehensive School)
 Iwan Guy (NAHT Wales)
 Peter Harrison (Headteacher, Gowerton School, Swansea)
 Karen Holland (Headteacher, Birchgrove Comprehensive School, Swansea)
 Professor Medwin Hughes (Vice Chancellor University of Wales Trinity ST. David)
 Rob Humphreys (Open University)
 Sue Jenkins (Headteacher, St. Joseph R C High School)
 Peter Jenkins (Headteacher, Hartridge High School)
 Alan Tudor Jones (Headteacher, Cwmtawe Comprehensive School, NPT)
 David Jones (Deeside College)
 Dylan Jones (Headteacher, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg)
 Gareth Jones (ASCL) Cymru
 Glyn Jones (Pembrokeshire College)
 Professor Merfyn Jones
 Anne Keane (HM Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales)
 Janet Kingston (Headteacher, Greenhill School, Tenby)




Huw Lewis AM (Deputy Minister for Children, Welsh Assembly Government)
 Barry Liles, Principal, Coleg Sir Gar
 Catherine Morgan (Senior Lecturer in Education University of Wales Trinity St. David)
 Ann Morris (Headteacher, Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg)
 Karl Napieralla (Corporate Director Education, Leisure and Life Long Learning, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council)
 Trefor Fon Owen (Acting Principal Coleg Harlech/WEA North)
 Jackie Parker (Crickhowell High School Powys)
 Richard Parry (Director of Education City and County of Swansea)
 Rex Phillips (NASUWT Cymru)
 Mark Provis (Torfaen County Borough Council)
 Rob Rogers (Head of Corporate Services, Department for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning)
 Professor Ken Reid (Swansea Met. Univ)
 Sally Speedy (Headteacher, Maesydderwen Comprehensive School, Powys)
 Huw Thomas (Auditor-General for Wales)
 Marian Thomas (Head of School University of Wales Trinity ST. David)
 Jacqui Weatherburn (Coleg Ceredigion)
 West Wales Consortium Exec. Comm.
 Professor Sir Adrian Webb
 Noreen Williamson (Gower College)
 Jonathan Wilson (Headteacher, Duffryn High School)

Members of the group have also met with a number of headteachers, school leaders, teachers, lecturers, governors, parents and learners at different conferences and meetings that they have attended all over Wales.

Written contributions

In addition to the contributors listed above, the following organisations and individuals made written contributions to our review.

All Wales Centre for Governor Training and Research
 Association of Directors of Education in Wales
 Association of School and College Leaders
 Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School
 ATL
 Bridgend College



Coleg Ceredigion
Coleg Llandrillo
Coleg Menai
Coleg Morgannwg
Coleg Sir Gar
ColegauCymru/CollegesWales
Croesyceiliog Primary School
CYDAG
DCELLS Support for Learners Division
Deeside College
General Teaching Council for Wales
Golftyn County Primary School
Governors Wales
Merthyr Tydfil College, University of Glamorgan
National Association of Head Teachers
National Association for Principal Educational Psychologists
National Deaf Children's Society Cymru
National Training Federation Wales
Neath Port Talbot College
New Inn Primary School
North Wales Consortium
Park Community Primary School
Pembrokeshire College
Pennaeth, Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg
Professor Ken Reid
Rhydyfro Primary School
South East Wales Consortium
St Andrew's Junior School
SWAMWAC
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
University and College Union
University of Wales, Newport
UWIC
VSC Cymru
Sir Adrian Webb
Welsh Language Board
Ysgol Gymraeg Castell-nedd
Ysgol Maes Garmon
Ysgol Rhydyfro
Ystrad Mynach College



Good practice

The following organisations provided examples of good practice that is currently operating in the sector:

Barry College
Bridgend College
Coleg Ceredigion
Coleg Gower
Coleg Harlech WEA
Coleg Llandrillo
Coleg Menai
Coleg Morgannwg
Coleg Sir Gâr
Deeside College
Merthyr Tydfil College
Neath Port Talbot College
Regional Learning Partnership South West Wales
The Rhyl Sixth
St. David's Catholic College
St Julian's Primary School
Ystrad Mynach College

Appendix 5: PISA 2009 – How the top 30 countries compare

Ranking	Reading	Mathematics	Science
1	Shanghai Ch (556)	Shanghai Ch (600)	Shanghai Ch (575)
2	Korea (539)	Singapore (562)	Finland (554)
3	Finland (536)	Hong Kong Ch (555)	Hong Kong Ch (549)
4	Hong Kong Ch (533)	Korea (546)	Singapore (542)
5	Singapore (526)	Taipei Ch (543)	Japan (539)
6	Canada (524)	Finland (541)	Korea (538)
7	New Zealand (521)	Liechtenstein (536)	New Zealand (532)
8	Japan (520)	Switzerland (534)	Canada (528)
9	Australia (515)	Japan (529)	Estonia (528)
10	Netherlands (508)	Canada (527)	Australia (527)
11	Belgium (506)	Netherlands (526)	Netherlands (522)
12	Norway (503)	Macao Ch (525)	Taipei Ch (520)
13	Estonia (501)	New Zealand (519)	Germany (520)
14	Switzerland (501)	Belgium (515)	Liechtenstein (520)
15	Poland (500)	Australia (514)	Switzerland (517)
16	Iceland (500)	Germany (513)	UK (514)
17	US (500)	Estonia (512)	Slovenia (512)
18	Liechtenstein (499)	Iceland (507)	Macao Ch (511)
19	Sweden (497)	Denmark (503)	Poland (508)
20	Germany (497)	Slovenia (501)	Ireland (508)
21	Ireland (496)	Norway (498)	Belgium (507)
22	France (496)	France (497)	Hungary (503)
23	Taipei Ch (495)	Slovak Rep (497)	US (502)
24	Denmark (495)	Austria (496)	Czech Rep (500)
25	UK (494)	Poland (495)	Norway (500)
26	Hungary (494)	Sweden (494)	Denmark (499)
27	Portugal (489)	Czech Rep (493)	France (498)
28	Macao Ch (487)	UK (492)	Iceland (496)
29	Italy (486)	Hungary (490)	Sweden (495)
30	Latvia (484)	Luxembourg (489)	Austria (494)

Source: OECD

The structure of education
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Appendix 6: Examination achievements of pupils aged 15 in 1995–96 and 2009–10

Table 1: Pupils achieving Level 1

Authority	Percentage achieving Level 1 1995–96	Percentage achieving Level 1 2009–2010	Increase
Isle of Anglesey	84.8	90.7	5.9
Gwynedd	84.1	91.1	7.0
Conwy	84.4	90.7	6.4
Denbighshire	80.7	89.8	9.1
Flintshire	87.5	94.0	6.5
Wrexham	80.0	91.9	11.9
Powys	83.3	93.2	9.9
Ceredigion	86.8	91.9	5.1
Pembrokeshire	85.1	89.6	4.5
Carmarthenshire	80.4	92.5	12.1
Swansea	78.9	88.5	9.6
Neath Port Talbot	72.4	92.5	20.1
Bridgend	74.4	89.1	14.7
The Vale of Glamorgan	83.4	91.8	8.4
Rhondda Cynon Taff	76.2	86.7	10.6
Merthyr Tydfil	69.6	85.7	16.0
Caerphilly	74.7	89.6	14.9
Blaenau Gwent	71.5	82.3	10.8
Torfaen	78.1	89.6	11.5
Monmouthshire	83.0	91.4	8.5
Newport	76.3	90.4	14.1
Cardiff	75.4	87.8	12.4
Total for Wales	79.3	89.7	10.4

Source: School Examination Performance Information, StatsWales

Table 2: Pupils achieving Level 2

Authority	Percentage achieving Level 2 1995–96	Percentage achieving Level 2 2009–2010	Increase
Isle of Anglesey	43.9	62.0	18.1
Gwynedd	45.0	67.4	22.4
Conwy	43.5	68.3	24.7
Denbighshire	39.5	60.7	21.3
Flintshire	45.4	67.7	22.3
Wrexham	39.7	62.2	22.5
Powys	47.6	69.2	21.6
Ceredigion	51.0	66.4	15.4
Pembrokeshire	45.1	62.4	17.4
Carmarthenshire	47.4	64.1	16.8
Swansea	43.0	63.4	20.3
Neath Port Talbot	35.4	66.6	31.2
Bridgend	38.8	60.8	22.0
The Vale of Glamorgan	45.6	73.4	27.9
Rhondda Cynon Taff	36.0	58.0	22.0
Merthyr Tydfil	29.3	54.8	25.6
Caerphilly	33.8	61.2	27.4
Blaenau Gwent	28.2	48.7	20.5
Torfaen	38.4	62.2	23.9
Monmouthshire	46.9	64.7	17.8
Newport	37.7	66.6	28.9
Cardiff	38.6	61.4	22.8
Total for Wales	41.6	63.7	22.1

Source: School Examination Performance Information, StatsWales

Appendix 7: Key Stage 3 summary tables 2010

Key Stage 3: SUMMARY TABLES, 2010						Cyfnod Allweddol 3: TABLAU CRYNODEB, 2010	
These tables show the average percentage achieving the expected level or above (Level 5+) by subject, and by FSM band						Mae'r tablau yma'n dangos y canrannau cyfartalog o ddisgyblion sy'n cyrraedd y lefel disgwylidig neu fwy (Lefel 5+) yn ôl pwnc, ac yn ôl grŵp PYD.	
ALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS						POB YSGOL UWCHRADD	
	up to 10%	over 10% and less than 15%	over 15% and less than 20%	over 20% and less than 30%	over 30%	ALL SCHOOLS	
	hyd at 10%	mwyr na 10% a hyd at 15%	mwyr na 15% a hyd at 20%	mwyr na 20% a hyd at 30%	mwyr na 30%	POB YSGOL	
CORE SUBJECTS						PYNCAU CRAIDD	
English	84	77	69	64	60	74	Saesneg
Welsh First Language	80	76	67	83	77	77	Cymraeg Iaith Gyntaf
Mathematics	85	79	74	70	64	77	Mathemateg
Science	87	81	76	71	65	78	Gwyddoniaeth
Core Subject Indicator	77	68	60	55	49	65	Dangosydd Pynciau Craidd
NON-CORE SUBJECTS						PYNCAU DI-GRADD	
Art	89	84	79	70	65	80	Celf
Design & Technology	88	82	77	73	63	79	Dylunio a Thechnoleg
Geography	87	78	74	66	56	75	Daearyddiaeth
History	87	79	72	66	57	76	Hanes
Information Technology	92	83	79	75	65	82	Technoleg Gwybodaeth
Modern Foreign Language	79	72	66	61	42	68	Iaith Dramor Fodern
Music	88	80	73	72	69	78	Cerddoriaeth
Physical Education	85	77	71	69	60	75	Addysg Gorfforol
Welsh Second Language	74	66	56	56	39	61	Cymraeg Ail Iaith
WELSH MEDIUM SCHOOLS						YSGOLION CYMRAEG	
	up to 6%	over 6% and less than 9%	over 9% and less than 12%	over 12% and less than 15%	over 15%	ALL WELSH MEDIUM SCHOOLS	
	hyd at 6%	mwyr na 6% a hyd at 9%	mwyr na 9% a hyd at 12%	mwyr na 12% a hyd at 15%	mwyr na 15%	POB YSGOL UWCHRADD CYMRAEG	
CORE SUBJECTS						PYNCAU CRAIDD	
English	84	81	78	74	69	78	Saesneg
Welsh First Language	83	80	78	73	67	77	Cymraeg Iaith Gyntaf
Mathematics	82	83	80	77	69	79	Mathemateg
Science	88	84	82	79	72	81	Gwyddoniaeth
Core Subject Indicator	77	75	72	67	57	70	Dangosydd Pynciau Craidd
NON-CORE SUBJECTS						PYNCAU DI-GRADD	
Art	91	87	86	75	85	85	Celf
Design & Technology	95	85	86	81	73	84	Dylunio a Thechnoleg
Geography	87	83	82	76	73	80	Daearyddiaeth
History	88	83	80	76	68	79	Hanes
Information Technology	92	92	90	80	70	86	Technoleg Gwybodaeth
Modern Foreign Language	80	80	78	73	66	76	Iaith Dramor Fodern
Music	91	85	79	77	70	80	Cerddoriaeth
Physical Education	84	84	80	69	76	79	Addysg Gorfforol
Welsh Second Language	75	67	66	54	56	63	Cymraeg Ail Iaith
ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS						YSGOLION SAESNEG	
	up to 10%	over 10% and less than 15%	over 15% and less than 20%	over 20% and less than 30%	over 30%	ALL ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS	
	hyd at 10%	mwyr na 10% a hyd at 15%	mwyr na 15% a hyd at 20%	mwyr na 20% a hyd at 30%	mwyr na 30%	POB YSGOL UWCHRADD SAESNEG	
CORE SUBJECTS						PYNCAU CRAIDD	
English	86	78	69	64	60	73	Saesneg
Mathematics	87	79	75	70	64	76	Mathemateg
Science	88	81	76	71	65	77	Gwyddoniaeth
Core Subject Indicator	79	67	60	55	49	63	Dangosydd Pynciau Craidd
NON-CORE SUBJECTS						PYNCAU DI-GRADD	
Art	89	86	78	70	65	79	Celf
Design & Technology	89	81	77	74	63	78	Dylunio a Thechnoleg
Geography	89	78	74	66	56	74	Daearyddiaeth
History	89	80	72	67	57	75	Hanes
Information Technology	93	83	80	76	65	81	Technoleg Gwybodaeth
Modern Foreign Language	79	71	65	61	42	66	Iaith Dramor Fodern
Music	89	81	73	72	69	78	Cerddoriaeth
Physical Education	85	78	69	69	60	74	Addysg Gorfforol
Welsh Second Language	74	66	56	56	39	60	Cymraeg Ail Iaith

Source: StatsWales

Appendix 8: Projected pupil numbers – maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in Wales

Age as at 31 August

Authority	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2023	2028
Under 5	71,229	70,709	70,580	70,559	70,681	70,932	71,300	72,624	71,339
5 to 16	359,804	360,138	361,217	363,072	365,701	368,744	373,062	386,760	390,431
16 and over	28,206	28,226	27,722	26,945	26,237	25,737	25,036	27,124	27,968

Source: DCELLS

Appendix 9: How Estyn assessed institutions in Wales between 2004 and 2010 via 7 Key Questions: A brief summary

Standards

1. How well do learners achieve?

The quality of education and training

2. How effective are teaching, training and assessment?
3. How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interests of the learners and the wider community?
4. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Leadership and management

5. How effective are leadership and strategic management
6. How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?
7. How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

These Key Questions were then given grades 1–5:

- Grade 1 – Good with outstanding features.
- Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings.
- Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings.
- Grade 4 – Some good features but shortcomings in important areas.
- Grade 5 – Many important shortcomings.

Appendix 10: Surplus school places in Wales – January 2010

Table 1: Primary schools

Local authority	Number on Roll Jan 2010	Capacity	Surplus capacity
Isle of Anglesey	4,825	6,610	1,785
Gwynedd	8,510	11,546	3,036
Conwy	7,510	9,611	2,101
Denbighshire	7,181	8,717	1,536
Flintshire	11,523	13,971	2,448
Wrexham	10,054	11,657	1,603
Powys	9,400	12,040	2,640
Ceredigion	4,866	6,620	1,754
Pembrokeshire	9,236	10,631	1,395
Carmarthenshire	13,390	18,408	5,018
Swansea	17,052	21,217	4,165
Neath Port Talbot	9,852	13,335	3,483
Bridgend	10,287	12,085	1,798
The Vale of Glamorgan	10,053	11,896	1,843
Rhondda Cynon Taff	17,728	23,934	6,206
Merthyr Tydfil	4,378	5,050	672
Caerphilly	13,927	17,826	3,899
Blaenau Gwent	5,101	6,809	1,708
Torfaen	6,879	8,417	1,538
Monmouthshire	6,212	7,707	1,495
Newport	11,631	13,865	2,234
Cardiff	24,342	29,001	4,659
Total	223,937	280,953	57,016

Table 2: Secondary schools

Local authority	Number on Roll Jan 2010	Capacity	Surplus capacity
Isle of Anglesey	4,260	5,462	1,202
Gwynedd	7,606	10,823	3,217
Conwy	7,359	8,852	1,493
Denbighshire	7,611	8,444	833
Flintshire	10,345	11,750	1,405
Wrexham	6,548	8,656	2,108
Powys	8,998	10,652	1,654
Ceredigion	4,894	6,484	1,590
Pembrokeshire	8,182	9,261	1,079
Carmarthenshire	12,235	13,154	919
Swansea	14,307	16,930	2,623
Neath Port Talbot	8,521	11,272	2,751
Bridgend	9,635	11,575	1,940
The Vale of Glamorgan	9,887	10,485	598
Rhondda Cynon Taff	17,934	21,898	3,964
Merthyr Tydfil	4,089	5,053	964
Caerphilly	12,339	14,700	2,361
Blaenau Gwent	4,327	5,749	1,422
Torfaen	7,905	8,514	609
Monmouthshire	5,272	6,006	734
Newport	10,491	10,454	-37
Cardiff	20,835	24,924	4,089
Total	203,580	241,098	37,518



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