

Guidance on establishing school/further education institution (FEI) consortia arrangements

Delivering skills that work for Wales



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Guidance

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Overview	This guidance document has been developed to support those Learning Partnerships who intend to progress post-16 transformation through the establishment of school/FEI consortia.
Action required	None. This document is for information only.
Further information	Further information about this publication can be obtained from: Joanne Meade Transformation Policy Branch Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Welsh Assembly Government Ffynnon Las, The Orchards, Ilex Close, Tŷ Glas Avenue, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5EZ Tel: 029 2068 1295 Fax: 029 2092 6001 e-mail: Transformation3@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document has been produced electronically only. It can be accessed from the Welsh Assembly Government website at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills
Related documents	<i>One Wales: a progressive agenda for Wales</i> (2007) <i>The Learning Country: Vision into Action</i> (2006) <i>Promise and Performance “Webb Review”</i> (2007) <i>Skills That Work for Wales Strategy: A Skills and Employment Strategy and Action Plan</i> (2008) <i>Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales</i> (2008) <i>Transformation – Y Siwrnai: Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales</i> (2009) <i>Learning Pathways 14–19 Guidance</i> (National Assembly for Wales Circular 37/2004) and <i>Guidance II</i> (National Assembly for Wales Circular 17/2006) <i>Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009</i> <i>Collaboration Arrangements between Further Education Institutions and Schools</i> (Welsh Assembly Government Circular No: 007/2009) <i>Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning in Wales</i> (2009)

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Summary

The Collaboration Arrangements (Maintained Schools and Further Education Bodies) (Wales) Regulations came into force on 31 December 2008.

The Transformation Policy and Framework, *Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales*, was published in September 2008. It provided models as a means to guide local authorities and the education and training providers towards the most appropriate means of collaborating based on the priorities for change and the changes to be fully considered. This included the governing bodies of Further Education Institutions (FEIs) and schools establishing voluntary collaborations, by joint governance, using the Regulations.

Welsh Assembly Government Circular No 007/2009 provided guidance on the intended scope of Regulations, the function of collaborative bodies; and the manner in which those functions may be discharged.

This document has now been developed in response to stakeholder request for a flexible guidance framework to support the development of effective school/FEI consortia arrangements.

Introduction

1. Fifteen local authority areas, with their partner Further Education Institutions (FEIs), working as Learning Partnerships, intend to progress post-16 transformation through the establishment of school/FEI consortia. This is by far the most popular transformation model. The successful and full implementation of the Transformation Policy across all Wales, and hence the delivery of *Skills that Work for Wales* therefore rests with those taking this model forward. Consequently these Learning Partnerships have a responsibility to ensure that this model brings equivalent efficiencies, effectiveness and flexibility as those models making more radical transformational change.
2. This document has been developed in response to stakeholder request for a flexible guidance framework to support the development of effective consortium arrangements, once the Strategic Outline Case has been approved. It has been drafted in consultation with senior representatives of local authorities, further education institutions and ColegauCymru. Finally it takes account of comments provided in two dedicated workshops at the 2009 Transformation Conference and those made by representatives of the FE Governance Review Panel.
3. The draft framework reflects:
 - a commitment to promote and support local authorities in establishing formal consortia, or developing the existing 14-19 networks as appropriate, that can operate with limited bureaucracy, generate confidence that delivery agreements will be adhered to and ensure that learner outcomes are significantly improved;
 - the priority of maximising the benefits that can be realised through use of public funds; and
 - a practical phased approach to take account of different sizes and complexities of local authorities in Wales. For example small local authorities could operate with just one consortium; larger local authorities will require several consortium groupings. Step 1 addresses establishing a consortium and uniting the collective work of the consortium under the leadership of the local authority and further education college(s). Step 2 moves the consortium into a more formal operational phase. Step 3 seeks to establish regional links over several local authority areas to take account of cross-border issues such as the delivery of Welsh-medium education; the development and application of digital learning; and ensuring access to specialist skills training.
4. Finally, the guidance also recognises the fact that some local authorities are currently planning consortium arrangements, whilst others are in an early operational stage and will be ready to move into Step 2 arrangements during 2010. However, all fifteen local authorities progressing the consortium arrangements should ensure that collaborative activity is being addressed by a regional strategy for at least some elements of learning delivery during 2011.

The Framework

Leadership The aim is to develop strategies that address learner needs and are not influenced by organisational self-interest. Action should be taken to improve leadership knowledge and understanding and gain insight into the work of the different sectors; to reach agreement and consensus on over-arching key strategies; and secure 'joined up' leadership, governance and management across the Learning Partnership and beyond.		
Step 1 Establish Consortium arrangements	Step 2 Formalising Consortium Arrangements	Step 3 Links across the Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authorities should engage with appropriate council and Assembly Members, and FE and school governing body members to ensure a full understanding of the rationale for change to the way post-16 education is provided and the possible positive impact on learners and the wider community. Local Authority Director of Education and Further Education Principal(s) commit to a strategic plan for the establishment of consortium arrangements. The 14-19 Network, Network Executive, or relevant sub-group should act as Strategic Management Board to lead the consortium, with a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The local authority and FEI(s) should determine the steps to be taken to formulate joint planning and use 16-18 funding allocations to achieve improved learning opportunities. The local authority and FEI establish links with other local authorities and FEIs to review learning provision; share good practice; evaluate progress; and develop relevant portfolios of learning. For example via existing fora such as 14–19 networks. Review existing Head of Terms or Terms of Reference and modify as necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authorities and FEIs to further develop regional links to jointly plan and deliver elements such as Welsh-medium Education; develop areas such as digital learning; and consider the benefits of establishing joint services. Local Authorities and FEIs should investigate the benefits of joint use of post-16 budgets. Further review working agreements and arrangements.

<p>remit laid out in a 'Heads of Terms' and 'Terms of Reference'. Membership should include the Local Authority Director of Education or equivalent Strategic Director, agreed representation for head teachers and principals, and the 14-19 Co-ordinator.</p> <p>It is important that the balance of representation on this board reflects the broad volume of learning being delivered by the various parties. The Board should be commissioned to make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish and publish a strategy to monitor and review progress against performance targets, agreed by all partners, as part of the approval of transformation plans. The targets should include clarity on evidence requirements for improvements in learning opportunities and the use of a cost benefit analysis and the DCELLS/ Tribal Financial Benchmarking: http://www.tribalbenchmarking.co.uk/worksheets. This will ensure that the efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility of the arrangements are suitable to		
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<p>meet the needs of learners and employers. Reference should be made to local strategies and national policies covering issues such as demand for Welsh-medium and faith-based provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take steps widely and positively to communicate the rationale for change and the possible positive impact on learners and the wider community, with a particular focus on the employer base in the area. • Provide an annual report for consortium members and relevant stakeholders detailing progress made and future developments. 		
<p>Governance¹</p> <p>It is recognised that governing bodies and joint committees have the freedom to determine their own arrangements, but the aim is to have an agreed framework to benefit everyone concerned.</p> <p>Activity should focus on taking steps to develop School and FEI Governors who will take an objective, local authority-wide view of improving learning; and assist in successfully implementing consortium arrangements.</p>		

¹ It should be noted that each body may need to seek their own independent legal advice on governance issues.

<p style="text-align: center;">Step 1 Establish Consortium arrangements</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Step 2 Formalising Consortium Arrangements</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Step 3 Links across the Region</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All governing bodies of 11-18 schools and FEIs to regularly discuss with each other post-16 arrangements and the work of the consortium. • The local authority to consider how best to involve governor representatives of individual schools/colleges in discussing joint post 16 planning and delivery, for example the governing bodies could nominate a 'collaboration' governor, who is not an employee of participating organisations, to serve on a local authority consortium board. The board would consider partnership delivery approaches; review progress and outcomes; and feedback information to and from individual governing bodies. • Minutes and reports to be published and be available for scrutiny by the full range of learning partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish local authority/school/ FEI(s) joint committee(s) to plan the delivery of post-16 learning, ideally using the collaboration regulations². • Establish a specific remit in relation to the responsibility of the joint committee and the local authority/FEI lead in terms of post-16 delivery, links to the 14-19 network or learning partnership as appropriate. • Consider the benefits of securing a commitment to collaboration arrangements through contracts between consortium partners or commissioning arrangements. 	

² In the case of local authorities that have a small number of maintained 11-18 schools, this development would be essential for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of provision delivery.

Management

The aim is to translate strategic priorities into operational activity that will make significant improvements for learners.

Activities should focus on establishing a central management group to review learning arrangements to maximise the effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility of delivery; and manage the delivery of learning in line with performance indicators.

Step 1 Establish Consortium arrangements	Step 2 Formalising Consortium Arrangements	Step 3 Links across the Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Consortium Management Group, with representation from all partnership organisations; which should link with 14-19 and pre-16 strategies, plans and delivery. This should operate to a clear remit and focus on actions and securing agreed outcomes, and monitor progress against targets. • Each local authority should consider appointing a Consortium Co-ordinator, (who may be the 14-19 Network Representative), who will act independently to support and steer consortium developments in line with agreed criteria; establish benchmarking and performance indicators; monitor and review progress; and be accountable to the Strategic Management Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Consortium Management Group to take responsibility for 14-19 delivery within the consortium in the context of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. • Involve Work Based Learning providers and other interested parties, as appropriate, at the planning stage. • Consider progress being made in other areas of Wales and the UK, to continually recommend successful and innovative approaches to learning. • Provide regular communications to the range of stakeholders. • Agree contractual arrangements within the consortium as appropriate to secure delivery over the range of partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop management arrangements as appropriate.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involve the National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) in discussions on planning and delivery.• Plans should prioritise the corporate development of learning strategies such as the use of digital learning environments; take account of the views of, and involve learners.• Secure activity to ensure that learners are provided with independent and advice and guidance.• Establish an annual plan for joint staff training, and where appropriate governor training, in light of the consortium working model being agreed and adopted.		
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