

# Public Document Pack



Contact Officer:  
Janet Kelly 01352 702301  
janet.kelly@flintshire.gov.uk

To: Cllr David Healey (Chairman)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Sian Braun, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Joe Johnson, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith, Martin White and David Williams

## **Co-opted Members**

Lynn Bartlett, David Hytch, Rebecca Stark and Wendy White

22 January 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

**NOTICE OF REMOTE MEETING**  
**EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, 28 JANUARY, 2021 at 2.00 PM**

Yours faithfully

Robert Robins  
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Due to the current restrictions on travel and the requirement for physical distancing, this meeting will not be held at its usual location. This will be a remote meeting and 'attendance' will be restricted to Committee Members. The meeting will be recorded.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team on 01352 702345.

## A G E N D A

### 1 APOLOGIES

**Purpose:** To receive any apologies.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

**Purpose:** To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

### 3 MINUTES (Pages 5 - 16)

**Purpose:** To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2020.

### 4 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING (Pages 17 - 28)

Report of Community and Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

**Purpose:** To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.

### 5 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND EXAMINATIONS 2021 UPDATE (Pages 29 - 154)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

**Purpose:** To consider School Improvement and update on proposals for Examinations in 2021

### 6 SCHOOL MODERNISATION UPDATE (Pages 155 - 162)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

**Purpose:** To provide Members with an update on the School Modernisation Programme

7 **SCHOOLS COVID LESSONS LEARNED & RISK ASSESSMENTS** (Pages 163 - 176)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

**Purpose:** To consider the lessons learnt by Schools during the emergency situation and the risk assessments being completed.

8 **COUNCIL PLAN 2020/21** (Pages 177 - 192)

Report of Chief Executive - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

**Purpose:** To consider the proposed Council Plan for 2020/21 with specific focus on the Committee's respective portfolio(s).

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## **EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 DECEMBER 2020**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

**PRESENT: Councillor David Healey (Chair)**

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Sian Braun, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Joe Johnson, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie and Ian Smith

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:** Lynn Bartlett, David Hytch, Rebecca Stark and Wendy White

**APOLOGY:** Senior Manager School Improvement Systems

**SUBSTITUTIONS:** Councillors: Andy Dunbobbin (for Martin White) and Patrick Heesom (for David Williams)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor David Williams attended as an observer

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education; Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Education & Youth); Primary Learning Advisor; Managing Director of Aura Leisure & Libraries, Libraries Development Manager, Leisure Development Manager, Finance and Commercial Manager, Business Improvement & Performance Manager

Mr. David Edwards and Mr. Martyn Froggett (GwE) for minute number 24

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, Democratic Services Officer and Democratic Services Support Officer

**20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

Councillor Tudor Jones declared a personal interest in Agenda item 10, as Chair of Trustees at the Holywell Leisure Centre.

**21. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November, 2020 were received.

Councillor David Mackie proposed that the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. The proposal was seconded by Mr David Hytch.

## **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **22. EMERGENCY SITUATION BRIEFING**

The Chief Executive referred to the Briefing Note he had circulated to Members earlier in the week and agreed for this to be sent to non-councillor members together with the Betsi Cadwaladr update on the Vaccination Programme and the Welsh Government (WG) document “Coronavirus Control Plan Alert Levels in Wales” which was published following the First Minister’s Statement. He referred to the implementation and speed of the new level 4 restrictions which the First Minister had announced earlier in the week which had included a clear list of services which were permitted to remain open. He reported on the encouraging pilot of the new Pfizer vaccine in a local care home in New Brighton which was a positive step forward.

The Chief Executive commented on the extensive press coverage on the major disparity of reporting of Welsh infection figures and to a discussion held with the Leader to assess the impact for Flintshire. The incidents rates were already in the system and that overall the numbers had not increased significantly. Once all the information on un-deferred cases were collated there would be a better understanding of the overall picture and it was hoped that Flintshire’s incidents rates did not rise as we entered the Christmas period.

The Leader of the Councillor commented that the situation in Wales was serious and reported on a telephone conference he had attended alongside the Chief Officer with all Head Teachers in the county regarding the re-opening of schools in January, 2021. He also reported on discussions with the Education Minister and other senior Ministers at WG regarding pupils returning in January.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) reported that WG had provided local authorities with flexibility with regard to the start of the new term but she reassured the committee that schools were open but that because of the impact and spread of the virus over the Christmas period the method of delivery of education may change. She confirmed the Council would be recommending that all schools should deliver online learning for the first week of the new term with as few pupils as possible entering the buildings but there would still need to be provision for vulnerable children and children and young people of key workers. WG had requested all face to face learning commence on the 18<sup>th</sup> January but the situation was constantly changing and discussions would be held with Head Teachers and Officers following the Christmas period to look at the advice, data and impact on schools to assess whether it was feasible to return to school or continue with the blended learning approach. Head Teachers were supportive of this approach but wanted to ensure parents were informed as soon as possible and that all arrangements

The Chair asked whether support for vulnerable and key critical worker pupils was being provided within the hub and said the impact on working parents having to arrange cover for children especially at short notice was a concern. He also sought clarification on the definition of “key worker”. In response the Chief Officer said that WG had been late sending out their list of keyworkers and schools did not have sufficient time to put arrangements in place. WG had been very clear in its guidance which would form part of the Covid legislation and included a definitive list for key workers. The Guidance stated that if either parent was a keyworker then they would be able to access that support for their children. This had been formally communicated to schools and at the meeting earlier today and she anticipated that this would not be an issue in January.

Mr Hytch asked if the provision for key workers for vulnerable children was being provided at the hub similar to what happened earlier in the year and was this information in the public knowledge at present. In response the Chief Officer confirmed it was agreed with Head Teachers that the communication would be sent to schools tomorrow as it was in the process of being translated. With regard to the Hub it was confirmed the council was not reverting to a resilience hub model as unlike the last lockdown, schools had operated in a Covid secure way since September and it was felt that they should make their own provision for their own vulnerable learners and their families. This had been endorsed by Head Teachers at the meeting that morning.

**RESOLVED:**

That the verbal update be noted.

**23. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING**

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the draft Forward Work Programme and reported that there had been no changes to the items listed since the last meeting. The actions arising from the last meeting had been completed as shown at Appendix 2 of the report. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) provided an update on the joint meeting held between Education & Youth and Social Services officers, where it had been agreed that a report on bringing health and social care staff together to provide intensive assessment and therapeutic support for young people who don't meet the threshold for CAMHS be presented to the joint meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committees, scheduled for 17 June, 2021.

In response to a question from Mr. David Hytch, the Facilitator reported that the Theatr Clwyd Shadow Board had met on 18 November to consider that the trade union have a representative on the Board. Liam Evans-Ford had confirmed that the Board had not agreed to progress this at this time but would re-consider this suggestion at a later date.

The recommendations outlined within the report were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Tudor Jones.

## **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

## **24. BLENDED LEARNING**

The Chair welcomed Jane Borthwick to the meeting, who had recently been seconded to the Education portfolio to provide additional support undertaking the role of Primary Learning Advisor. He also welcomed David Edwards and Martyn Froggett from GwE to the meeting.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) introduced the blended learning report, advising that the Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated the introduction of a blended learning approach in Flintshire schools. The report provided an overview on how blended learning was progressing and the appendices to the report outlined the good practices undertaken across Flintshire schools.

The Chief Officer greatly appreciated of the support provided by the Regional School Improvement Service (GwE) to staff and learners which had enabled staff at schools to improve their digital skills, their knowledge of different ways learning could be delivered and the variety of learning platforms available. The report provided an overview of how this approach had been developed since March, 2020 and what had been achieved. The Chief Officer referred to the significant £50m investment by Welsh Government (WG) through the Hwb Programme and the support provided to learners who did not have electronic devices or broadband via the Hwb and the Council to enable them to access the online offer.

David Edwards and Martyn Froggett provided a detailed presentation which covered the following areas:-

- Blended Learning
- Why was Blended Learning being focused on now?
- What does Blended Learning look like?
- The four principles
- What does Blended Learning look like in practice
- Next Steps
- Blended Learning in High Schools
- Planning for Blended Learning
- Progress so far



It was agreed that a copy of the presentation slides be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

The Chair and Leader of the Council thanked David Edwards and Martyn Froggett for the work they had undertaken in supporting schools during the emergency situation and congratulated all school staff for their hard work in meeting the challenge.

Councillor Dave Mackie thanked the officers for the presentation and report. He commented on the Estyn review of how schools and local authorities had been supporting learners during the emergency situation and asked that the feedback from Estyn be shared with the Committee. He also commented on the concern around children who did not have access to broadband or digital devices and the negative impact this would have on their education. The Chief Officer confirmed that the formal feedback letter on blended learning from Estyn would be presented to the Committee in the new year.

In response to the concerns around learners accessing education services, the Primary Learner Advisor advised that work was being undertaken to carry out an assessment to identify the levels of access to devices and broadband for learners across Flintshire. The outcome of this assessment could be presented to the Committee, at a later date, as part of the update report on the Hwb Digital Programme for Wales. The Chief Officer confirmed that a large number of devices had been provided to schools to distribute to learners who did not have access to digital devices at home. She referred to the resources available through the Hwb Digital Programme for Wales and the supply of 200 recycled Council laptops which had been distributed to schools.

Mr David Hytch commended the effort of all school staff during the emergency situation and also thanked GwE for their leadership and support during the implementation of on-line learning. He commented on the functionality of broadband and asked if schools on adjacent sites were able to deliver on-line classes at the same time and asked if further investment in technology would assist in improving broadband at schools. He also commented on pupils being grouped into 'bubbles' at school and commented on the difficulties of pupils remaining in a classroom and a teacher coming to them if it was a subject where specialist equipment was needed. Also it was difficult to group pupils into 'bubbles' on their ability as they did not remain in their sets in a school setting but would be taught in their set classroom online which could cause some confusion.

The Chief Officer that the Hwb Digital Programme for Wales sought to improve the digital network of all schools and that the outcome of the assessment to establish the levels of access to devices and broadband for learners across Flintshire would assist in identifying the improvements needed. The assessment would also provide evidence to WG of the demand needed in Wales so that appropriate resources could be distributed. Martyn Froggett commented on the challenges for schools to ensure the

health and safety of pupils and reported that this had resulted in arrangements for setting arrangements to be amended with pupils being taught in mixed ability classes.

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Cunningham around the communication with Trade Unions, the Chief Officer reported that there had been national engagement with WG and that there had been no challenges on a local level. David Edwards advised that one of the significant considerations of implementing blended learning was around the well-being of school staff and one of the benefits of its implementation had been around improved communication, and he therefore did not envisage blended learning disappearing once the emergency situation had ended.

Councillor Gladys Healey also thanked GwE, all school staff and Council officers for their hard work during the emergency situation. She asked what support was in place for children who required additional support if English was not their first language, they had dyslexia or were not confident using digital devices. The Chief Officer reported on the additional support provided by the Inclusion Team and explained that the way in which lessons were planned provided support for children who required it. The Primary Learning Advisor confirmed that pupils who were identified as requiring additional learning needs had an individual plan or would form part of a larger plan within the schools. These pupils would be split into teams and allocated different work with the support of teaching assistants and support staff.

In response to a question from Mrs. Lynn Bartlett around anxiety, the Chief Officer advised that the Inclusion Team were providing advice and guidance to schools in dealing with increased anxiety due to the emergency situation. She also outlined the work of the School Counselling Team who worked across all schools to provide support where incidents had been identified.

Mrs Bartlett had a question on the well-being of pupils and that currently we are constantly teaching children about hygiene and had concerns about some children becoming hypervigilant about hygiene issues and asked if this was being considered moving forward and whether schools were being given advice for when this becomes an anxiety. In response the Chief Officer said the way we were living with all the stresses we were having to work through was going to manifest in some ways but she was not aware of this. The Inclusion Team provided advice and guidance to schools and felt Head Teachers would ask the Team if they had concerns on this but agreed to refer this to the School Counselling Team who work across all schools to ensure Head Teachers were able to identify these issues and could call on the Team for support.

In response to a question from Cllr Ian Smith about how the £50m funding through the Hwb Digital Programme was shared between local authorities and how much it amounted to per pupil, the Chief Officer agreed to provide the Committee with an overview from the IT team who were leading on this.

Mrs. Rebecca Stark thanked officers for the report. She commented on the support provided to children with additional learning needs and praised the way in which

schools had adapted and engaged with the children. She raised concern around the transition of year 6 pupils into year 7 and also difficulties in engaging with lower ability groups with a disparity between disadvantaged learners, and asked if it was possible to monitor these children to ensure that they did not fall behind in their learning and assess the impact the emergency situation had had on pupils. She suggested that this could be reported back to the Committee in the future. The Chief Officer advised that ensuring children did not fall behind had been acknowledged by WG who had allocated a significant amount of funding, delegated to schools to enable them to recruit additional support staff and to provide recovery programmes for learners. Colleagues from GwE would be overseeing the recovery plans.

Mr Hytch suggested that the thanks of the Committee be passed to all Headteachers and School Support staff for their hard work and dedication during the emergency situation to the benefit of learners. This suggestion was supported by the Committee.

The recommendations outlined within the report were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Bob Connah

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee acknowledges the strong partnership working between Flintshire Schools and GwE which has established successful approaches to blended learning for the benefit of learners during the pandemic;
- (b) That the Committee is assured of the quality of blended learning in Flintshire Schools to date and notes the positive impact on the professional development of the schools' workforce to meet this new approach to teaching and learning and commends members of the workforce in meeting the challenges;
- (c) That the Committee welcomes the significant investment by Welsh Government in schools' digital infrastructure but acknowledges this is an area of ever increasing demand to ensure the effective delivery of blended learning moving forward; and
- (d) That the Chairman writes to schools' on behalf of the Committee to thank them for their work and dedication throughout the emergency situation to the benefit of learners

**25. ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING**

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) introduced a report to provide the Committee with an overview of how Adult Community Learning (ACL) funding was changing in Flintshire. The report also sought approval to proceed with the formation of a joint Flintshire and Wrexham Adult Community Learning Partnership, which would provide oversight and management of (ACL) across both Council areas.

Flintshire County Council had responsibility for providing oversight of ACL in Flintshire for administering the Community Learning Grant (CLG) and for ensuring that partners effectively collaborate to deliver high quality provision for learners. The new guidance for the delivery of ACL provision for 2020/21 onwards required a Delivery Plan which outlined all planned CLG funded delivery from 1 September 2020. WG had worked with Councils during the transition period, taking into account the introduction of the new funding model and also the considerable challenges presented by the emergency situation.

The Chief Officer reported that Flintshire and Wrexham Councils had operated separate partnerships due to the significant difference to its funding allocations from the WG CLG. The changes to funding would provide the opportunity to combine both partnerships, which were in the main, made up of the same delivery partners. The proposals was to form a joint partnership from 1 April 2021 which would provide oversight of quality, curriculum, safeguarding, self-evaluation and outcomes for learners. WG were supportive of the proposal to combine both partnerships and this would enable more effective strategic and operational decision making whilst also maximising the funding for each area.

Mr. David Hytch asked for information on what the criteria was to access ACL and also whether this was tied to the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act and the requirement to assist people up to the age of 25. The Chief Officer advised that the ACL was not specifically tied to the ALN Act and that grant funding had been in place for some time but Flintshire in the past had not been a positive beneficiary. There would be the opportunity to look at resources to support a significant number of learners and the co-location of the Pupil Referral Unit was especially beneficial for many of the learners with the enhancement of the provision available. It would accommodate those learners with additional learning needs and also provide a link to the Deeside Community Trust to support adults with their English and Digital Literacy skills. WG had provided a specific remit for the use of the funding but the impact on the community would be significant. It was agreed that information on what the criteria was to access Adult Community Learning would be provided to the Committee following the meeting.

The Chair spoke of previous wide ranging courses available within the community which had been popular with older people, and once the funding had changed there seemed to be a focus on basic skills which had narrowed the opportunities. Whilst he welcomed the additional funding and the partnership with Wrexham Council but felt that from a community perspective courses should be available which would benefit people within the community, especially when coming out of the emergency situation. The Chief Officer advised of the opportunities available but explained that there were conditions attached to the increased funding. By working in partnership with the Deeside Trust and blending streams together there would be the opportunity to offer a wide variety of courses that all members of the community could access. The Committee could receive regular updates on its delivery.

The recommendations outlined within the report were moved by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin and seconded by Councillor Janet Axworthy.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee note the Adult Community Learning funding within Flintshire and acknowledge the increased funding allocation through the Community Learning Grant (CLG) by Welsh Government;
- (b) That the Committee note the development work with Wrexham Adult Learning Partnership and give approval for Flintshire to proceed with forming a joint Flintshire and Wrexham Adult Community Learning Partnership.

**26. RECOVERY STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) introduced the update on the risk register and risk mitigation actions, shown at Appendix 1 and 2 of the report.

The Chief Officer provided an update on the recovery objectives for the service portfolio, as detailed within the report. She confirmed that key services were continuing to support schools working within the risk assessments and provided an update on the Joint Archives Service and update on the online archive.

Mr David Hytch commented on the access to Governors Cymru advisory service for all schools which was invaluable and appreciated with advice readily available.

This recommendation outlined within the report was moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Ian Smith.

**RESOLVED:**

That the updated Risk Register and Risk Mitigation Actions, as outlined within the report, be noted.

**27. MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR RECOVERY, PORTFOLIO AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) introduced a report to present a summary of performance at the mid-year point relevant to the Committee. The report was an exception based report and therefore focused on the areas of under-performance.

The Chief Officer drew the Committees attention to the Youth Justice Service which had faced significant challenges during the emergency situation and had risen to the challenge in funding creative ways in engaging with young people. She also

reported that the Education Co-ordinator post had been filled and this would provide greater capacity to work with young people in funding appropriate pathways to education and work.

In response to a question from Councillor Dave Mackie around the number of childcare providers, the Chief Officer provided an assurance around the number of childcare providers in Flintshire and outlined the grant scheme provided by Welsh Government and administered by the Council to childcare providers during the emergency situation.

This recommendation outlined within the report was moved by Councillor Andy Dunbobbin and seconded by Mrs Lynn Bartlett.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**28. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following items by virtue of exempt information under paragraph(s) 15 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

**29. AURA: BUSINESS RECOVERY PLAN**

The Managing Director of Aura provided a detailed presentation which covered the following areas:-

- Recovery Plan: Phase 1
  - Mitigation of Costs
- Recovery Plan: Phase 2
  - Re-opening of Libraries
  - Re-opening of Leisure Centres
  - Aura Employees
  - Employee Survey
  - Prepare for the 'New Normal'
- Financial Impact of Covid-19

Councillor Dave Mackie praised the way in which Aura had adapted during the emergency situation and felt confident that members of the public would feel safe returning to Deeside Leisure Centre when possible, due to the measures being taken by all staff to ensure their safety.

In response to a question around the cost to re-develop Deeside Leisure Centre, the Managing Director confirmed that the costs were unknown at this stage as they could not access the site whilst it was being used as a community hospital.

In response to comments made by Councillor Tudor Jones, the Managing Director agreed that continued additional financial support would be required from the Welsh Government.

Councillor Janet Axworthy suggested that a letter be sent to AURA colleagues by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee, thanking them for their work, dedication and initiative throughout the emergency situation. This suggestion was supported by the Committee.

The recommendations outlined within the report were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Ian Smith.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee note the trading and operational challenges presented by Covid-19 and the challenges presented in relation to the continuation of the current level of service delivery post March 2021; and
- (b) That the Chairman writes to AURA colleagues on behalf of the Committee to thank them for their work, dedication and initiative throughout the emergency situation.

**29. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE**

There was no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2pm and ended at 4.12 pm)

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**Chairman**

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## EDUCATION YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> January, 2021
<b>Report Subject</b>	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
<b>Report Author</b>	Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report also shows actions arising from previous meetings of the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the progress made in completing them. Any outstanding actions will be continued to be reported to the Committee as shown in Appendix 2.

### RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.
3	That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

## **REPORT DETAILS**

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING</b>
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?</li><li>2. Is it an area of major change or risk?</li><li>3. Are there issues of concern in performance?</li><li>4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?</li><li>5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?</li><li>6. Is the issue of Public or Member concern?</li></ol>
1.03	In previous meetings, requests for information, reports or actions have been made. These have been summarised as action points. Following a meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2018, it was recognised that there was a need to formalise such reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny Committees, as 'Matters Arising' was not an item which can feature on an agenda.
1.04	It was suggested that the 'Action tracking' approach be trialled for the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Following a successful trial, it was agreed to extend the approach to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
1.05	The Action Tracking details including an update on progress is attached at Appendix 2.

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	None as a result of this report.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	In some cases, action owners have been contacted to provide an update on their actions.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	None as a result of this report.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme Appendix 2 – Action Tracking for the Education Youth & Culture OSC.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	Minutes of previous meetings of the Committee as identified in Appendix 2.  <b>Contact Officer:</b> Ceri Shotton Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702305 <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk">ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk</a>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<b>Improvement Plan:</b> the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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**CURRENT FWP**

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible / Contact Officer	Submission Deadline
<p><b>Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2021</b> <b>2.00pm</b></p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 21</p>	<p><b>Self Evaluation of Education Services 2019 – 2021</b></p>	<p>To update Members on overall service performance over the last two years and to provide the formal feedback letter on blended learning from Estyn</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education &amp; Youth)</p>	
	<p><b>School Attendance and Exclusions</b></p>	<p>To provide the Committee with an update on learner attendance and exclusions for Flintshire Schools</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education &amp; Youth)</p>	
	<p><b>Community Asset Transfer Update</b></p>	<p>To provide an update on the impact the emergency situation has had on the Business Plan for Cambrian Aquatics and Holywell Leisure Centre</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Housing &amp; Assets)</p>	
	<p><b>Hwb Digital Programme</b></p>	<p>To provide an update on the Hwb Digital Programme and the outcome of the assessment to identify the levels of access to devices and broadband for learners across Flintshire</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education &amp; Youth)</p>	

<p><b>Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2021</b></p> <p><b>2.00pm</b></p> <p><b>Joint meeting with Social &amp; Health Care OSC</b></p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 22</p>	<p><b>ALN Tranformation</b></p>	<p>To provide Members with an update on the Authority’s implementation plan and any national/regional updates</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officers (Education &amp; Youth and Social Services)</p>	
	<p><b>Looked After Children</b></p>	<p>To provide Members with an update on the provision for and outcomes of Looked After Children</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officers (Education &amp; Youth and Social Services)</p>	
	<p><b>Safeguarding in Education</b></p>	<p>To provide Members with an update on the discharge of statutory safeguarding duties in schools and the Education portfolio.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education &amp; Youth)</p>	
	<p><b>Multi Systematic Therapy Project</b></p>	<p>To provide an update on the Project.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Social Services)</p>	
	<p><b>Intensive Assessment and Therapeutic Support</b></p>	<p>To provide an update on bringing health and social care staff together to provide intensive assessment and therapeutic support for young people who don’t meet the thresholds for CAMHS.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education &amp; Youth) / Chief Officer (Social Services)</p>	
<p><b>Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2021</b></p> <p><b>2.00pm</b></p>	<p><b>Annual Report from Regional School Improvement Service, GwE</b></p>	<p>To receive an update on the support provided by the regional school effectiveness and improvement service, GWE and its impact on schools</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education &amp; Youth) and Managing Director of GwE</p>	

	<b>Social Media and Internet Safety</b>	To provide Members with an update on the Portfolio’s Social Media and Internet Safety policy and provision	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)	
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**INFORMATION REPORTS TO BE CIRCULATED TO THE COMMITTEE**

Item	Purpose of information report	Month
Health & Safety in Schools	Information report on accidents during the academic year and the actions taken to support schools in achieving healthy and safe environment	December

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**REGULAR ITEMS**

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
	<b>School Modernisation</b>	To update Members on the progress made with School Modernisation	Senior Manager School Planning & Provision
<b>February</b>	<b>Self-evaluation on education services</b>	To update Members on overall service performance	Interim Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
<b>April</b>	<b>Learner Outcomes – include attendance and exclusions in annual learner outcomes report</b>	To provide Members with a summary of learner outcomes across primary and secondary school	Interim Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
<b>June</b>	<b>Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE)</b>	To receive an update on progress with the development of the regional school effectiveness and improvement service, to include a presentation from the Chief Officer of GwE.	Interim Chief Officer (Education & Youth)

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
<b>December</b>	<b>School Balances</b>	To provide the Committee with details of the closing balances held by Flintshire schools at the end of the financial year	Finance Manager
<b>Annually</b>	<b>Learning from the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG);</b>	To receive the annual report on progress and learning from the SPMG	Senior Manager – School Improvement;
<b>Annually</b>	<b>Social Media &amp; Internet Safety</b>	To receive an annual report assurance/monitoring	Healthy Schools Practitioner
	<b>Class Size Grant</b>	To receive a regular update on how the Class Sizes Grant from Welsh Government was being used and how this aligned to the School Modernisation Programme	Senior Manager School Planning & Provision



**ACTION TRACKING FOR THE EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
17.12.2020	4. Emergency Situation Briefing (verbal)	Email to be sent to Co-opted Members of the Committee with the private briefing note for Councillors and the Vaccination Plan briefing.	Colin Everett / Ceri Shotton	Briefing note on the Vaccination Plan circulated to Co-opted Members via e-mail on 18.12.2020	Completed
17.12.2020	5. Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking	The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed that a report on bringing health and social care staff together to provide intensive assessment and therapeutic support for young people who don't meet the thresholds for CAMHS, would be submitted to the Joint Social & Health Care and Education, Youth & Culture OSC meeting in June 2021.	Ceri Shotton / Claire Homard	Report added to FWP for the Joint OSC meeting scheduled for 17 <sup>th</sup> June, 2021.	Completed
17.12.2020	6. Blended Learning	It was agreed that a copy of the presentation be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.	Ceri Shotton	Copy of presentation slides circulated to the Committee via e-mail on 18.12.2020.	Completed
17.12.2020	6. Blended Learning	In response to a question from Cllr Ian Smith about how the £50m funding was shared between local authorities and how much it amounted to per pupil, Claire Homard agreed to provide an	Claire Homard	Information being awaited.	On-going

		overview from the IT team who are leading on this.			
17.12.2020	6. Blended Learning	In response to a request from Cllr Dave Mackie, Claire Homard confirmed that the formal feedback letter on blended learning from Estyn would be presented to the Committee in the new year.	Claire Homard / Ceri Shotton	Report added to FWP for the Committee meeting scheduled for 18.03.2021.	Completed
17.12.2020	6. Blended Learning	It was agreed that the outcome of the assessment to identify the levels of access to devices and broadband for learners across Flintshire be provided as part of an update report to the Committee on the Hwb Digital Programme for Wales.	Jane Borthwick / Ceri Shotton	Report added to the FWP under 'items to be scheduled'.	Completed
17.12.2020	6. Blended Learning	That the Chairman writes to schools' on behalf of the Committee to thank them for their work and dedication throughout the emergency situation to the benefit of learners.	Cllr David Healey / Ceri Shotton	Letter of thanks to all Headteachers and School Support Staff e-mailed to all Headteachers on 18.01.2021.	Completed
17.12.2020	7. Adult Community Learning	Following a question from David Hytch, it was agreed that information on what the criteria was to access Adult Community Learning would be provided to the Committee following the meeting.	Claire Homard / Vicky Barlow	Information circulated to the Committee on 21.01.2021	Completed

## ACTION TRACKING

## APPENDIX 2

17.12.2020	10. Aura: Business Recovery Plan	That the Chairman writes to AURA colleagues on behalf of the Committee to thank them for their work, dedication and initiative throughout the emergency situation.	Cllr David Healey / Ceri Shotton	Letter of thanks to Mike Welch and all Aura staff e-mailed on 20.01.2021.	Completed
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## EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday, 28 <sup>th</sup> January, 2021
<b>Report Subject</b>	School Improvement and Examination 2021 Update
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Education
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the provider of school improvement services to the Council, GwE has played a vital and integral role during the Covid-19 emergency to support schools in Flintshire and across North Wales. The service has repeatedly changed its focus to meet the needs of schools in the rapidly changing environment created by the pandemic and has been a critical partner in the Flintshire's response to support school leaders and the schools' workforce in their core role of supporting learners across all phases of education. This began immediately with the first lockdown in March 2020 when educational provision was suspended and continues right up to the current day when schools are having to provide a combination of blended and distance learning with some limited face to face provision for particular groups of learners.

During this time, GwE has been flexible and agile and has worked effectively with Flintshire's Education Portfolio and wide range of stakeholders to ensure the well-being of school leaders, their staff and their learners.

GwE has also worked effectively with Welsh Government on policy and continuity of learning, and with Estyn to rapidly develop guidance and resources for distance and blended learning which has enabled schools in Flintshire to respond quickly to a different model of educational delivery forced upon them by the pandemic. GwE has enabled schools to develop strategies and resources for accelerated learning to target pupils' skills and knowledge, particularly in literacy and numeracy that have been impacted by disrupted educational provision over many months.

The professional development offer for the schools' workforce has been instrumental in quickly upskilling teachers and support staff in the use of digital technology and online learning tools to enable them to deliver a blended learning approach. Supporting schools to maintain their collaborative approach through well-established cluster working has ensured that effective practice has been

widely shared and the significant workload for schools in this period of intense change to be distributed, benefitting everyone. GwE officers have also been at the forefront of the discussion regarding the development of a model for assessment and examinations for 2021, working closely with Welsh Government (WG), the examination board (WJEC), and the examination regulator, Qualifications Wales (QW).

The detailed appendices attached to this report comprehensively outline the work of GwE in supporting school improvement in Flintshire since March 2020 and their contribution to the development of a revised assessment and examination framework for Wales in 2021.

Estyn has recently published a national review of the response to the pandemic by local authorities and regional consortia and these documents are included to provide external assurance to the committee.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The committee confirms it has been able to effectively scrutinise the work of GwE in their delivery of school improvement services to Flintshire schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2	The committee acknowledges the extensive range of support delivered by GwE to enable schools to quickly and effectively change their models of educational provision in direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
3	The committee acknowledges the effective partnership working between GwE and the Education Portfolio to ensure that Flintshire schools received high quality and timely support in an unprecedented period of change and anxiety.

## REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND EXAMINATION 2021 UPDATE REPORT</b>
1.01	<p>Appendix 1 – GwE Report to Local Authority Scrutiny Committees Autumn 2020 - provides a detailed overview of the response from GwE to the Covid-19 pandemic in its role as a provider of school improvement services. It outlines how the six local authorities and GwE, through the Management Board, took a collegiate and collective approach to supporting all schools across the region. This resulted in a consistent framework within which everyone operated, reducing workload for all and sharing the most effective practice across the region. Attached is also a short summary noted as Appendix 1a of the work undertaken by GwE to support school improvement in a rapidly changing environment.</p> <p>The report tracks the early work undertaken by GwE with local authorities to provide a model risk assessment process to ensure pupils could safely return to school for the Check in and Catch up sessions and then for the full reopening of schools in September.</p>

1.02	<p>Once schools reopened and positive Covid-19 cases were almost immediately identified in many schools across the region, this resulted in classes or even whole year groups having to go into isolation and access learning from home. GwE then switched its attention to developing resources and toolkits to enable schools to provide quality remote learning experiences and support materials for staff and parents. This blended learning offer is referenced in the report at Appendix 1 and has also been the subject of a separate, detailed report to the committee in December 2020.</p>
1.03	<p>The development of a comprehensive professional learning offer was essential alongside the new teaching and learning resources to ensure staff quickly acquired the skills to engage learners remotely using a range of digital platforms. This is outlined in the Appendix 1c attached to this report and demonstrates the huge range of training and development offered to the schools workforce across the region. This was welcomed by Flintshire schools and there have been very high levels of engagement.</p>
1.04	<p>Unsurprisingly, following the return to school in September, it quickly became clear that many learners had not progressed as much as they would have done if schools had been able to remain open. Evidence from a range of reliable sources including schools, Estyn, the Children's Commissioner, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and many children's charities suggested that most or all learners were affected, and that the most vulnerable had been affected the most significantly.</p> <p>Welsh Government responded with the introduction of an Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) and specific funding for schools and educational consortia to deliver a 'Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards' strategy. This was designed to support learners to accelerate their skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and thereby given them access to the whole curriculum. GwE led the development of the ALP for the region and details of the resources they developed are outlined at Appendix 1b and will be highlighted in a short presentation at the committee meeting.</p>
1.05	<p>One of the most significant challenges faced by Welsh Government and the education sector in the current climate is the delivery of an equitable and robust system of assessment and examinations for GCSE, A Level and vocational qualifications for 2021. The Welsh Government commissioned an independent review of the challenges experienced in 2020 of awarding student grades and sought advice from a range of professionals and academics to create a more stable and equitable model for 2021.</p> <p>GwE officers and headteacher representatives have been involved in working parties with the examination board WJEC, the regulator Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government to develop a new model which was published in November 2020. At that time, the Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, confirmed that traditional examinations would be replaced by a 3 pillar approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• non-examination assessments where currently planned in the qualification;</li> <li>• internal assessments; and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assessments that are externally set and marked.</li> </ul>
1.06	<p>However, with the continuing spread of Covid-19 and the emergence of a new variant of the virus which is transmitted much more easily, Welsh Government made the decision to direct schools to adopt a remote learning approach for pupils at the beginning of January. This position remains under review but there is a real possibility that schools will continue to be closed for face to face learning for all but vulnerable learners and children of critical workers until February half term.</p> <p>This has particular ramifications for examination groups who will not be able to access the full taught curriculum or the planned assessment activities. Welsh Government have therefore reviewed their proposals again for the awarding of grades to students in 2021.</p> <p>On Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January the Education Minister for Wales, Kirsty Williams announced that grades would be awarded in the following manner:</p> <p><i>“First, it is my intention that learners undertaking GCSE, AS and A levels approved by Qualifications Wales will have their qualifications awarded through a Centre-Determined Grade model. This means that grades will be determined by their school or college based on an assessment of the learner’s work.</i></p> <p><i>Schools and colleges will be able to use a range of evidence to determine the grades to be awarded to their learners, including Non-Examination Assessment elements, mock-exams, and classwork. In addition, the WJEC will offer a set of adapted past papers which can enable schools to continue to assess learning within their teaching plans, providing extra support for teachers and learners.</i></p> <p><i>Qualifications Wales will work with WJEC, supported by the DDAG, to provide an assessment framework to support schools and colleges in developing their assessment plans, which should demonstrate sufficient coverage of key concepts to allow learners to progress, and detail for how the centre has determined a learner’s grade. These assessment plans will be quality assured by WJEC.</i></p> <p><i>Second, recognising the challenges posed by the ongoing disruption and remote learning, the deadlines and controls around non-exam assessment are being removed and it will not be moderated by the WJEC. However where possible we would continue to encourage schools and colleges to support learners to undertake some of their Non-Examination Assessment to continue to build learning and skills. Building knowledge and skills, and covering core concepts to support progression, remains a priority and should continue to be a focus, supported by our guidance and approach to distance learning as appropriate.</i></p> <p><i>Third, alongside the Assessment Framework, WJEC will publish guidance to support schools and colleges to develop internal quality assurance processes and the Design and Delivery Group will consider an approach to promote consistency across Wales.”</i></p>



	GwE and the Education Portfolio will continue to support all Flintshire secondary schools to implement the new model of assessment to be in the best position to award appropriate grades to students.
1.07	<p>Welsh Government commissioned Estyn, the independent inspectorate for education and training in Wales, to provide an overview of how local authorities and regional consortia have worked with schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) to promote learning and support vulnerable pupils during the COVID-19 period between June and November 2020. Through virtual interviews with school leaders, council officers and officers of the regional consortia; examination of a range of documentary evidence provided and surveys of parents and young people, Estyn has captured the ways local authorities and regional consortia have adapted their work to respond to the challenges resulting from COVID-19.</p> <p>The national report and the individual reports to consortia and local authorities include cameos of work that has been undertaken. Whilst they cannot be considered as formal evaluative case studies as usually presented by Estyn as best practice, they are included to exemplify points raised in the report, giving a flavour of the work that has taken place across Wales.</p> <p>The national thematic report is included at Appendix 2 and the individual report for GwE is included at Appendix 3. Both acknowledge and affirm the positive work undertaken by GwE in supporting schools across the North Wales region during the pandemic. The report for Flintshire will be attached to the Portfolio's Self Evaluation report due to be presented to the committee in March.</p>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	The Council commissions its school improvement services through GwE via an Inter-Authority Agreement with the other North Wales councils. This sets the value of the financial contribution from Flintshire which can be reviewed every three years.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	<p>The Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment which outlines key risks related to the continued disruption of teaching and learning as a result of the ongoing pandemic and method statements which describe how these risks are managed. These are regularly reported to the committee.</p> <p>GwE also maintains its own risk register and follows its own risk monitoring processes which are reported on regularly to the GwE Joint Committee.</p>

<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	N/A

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 - GwE Report for Scrutiny Committees</p> <p><u>Supporting Appendices</u></p> <p>1a. Summary of GwE Work Undertaken</p> <p>1b Accelerated Learning Report</p> <p>1c Professional Learning Offer</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 (Estyn)</p> <p>Appendix 3 – GwE Letter (Estyn)</p>

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p>Ministerial statement regarding 2021 summer assessments</p> <p><a href="https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-general-qualifications-2021-0">https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-general-qualifications-2021-0</a></p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Claire Homard, Chief Officer Education &amp; Youth</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704190</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk">claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
	<p><b>GwE</b> – Regional School Effectiveness &amp; Improvement Service for North Wales</p> <p><b>Estyn</b> – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales</p> <p><b>Qualifications Wales (QW)</b> – The independent organisation responsible for regulating general and vocational qualifications in Wales.</p> <p><b>The Welsh Joint Education Council</b> – (WJEC) is an examination board, providing qualifications and exam assessment to schools and colleges in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and independent regions. WJEC is the largest provider in Wales.</p> <p><b>Management Board</b> – the regional educational leadership board of the 6 Chief Officers for Education and the Senior Management Team of GwE</p> <p><b>The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)</b> – is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 37 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade and which has a strong focus on education delivery and development.</p>



## **REPORT TO LOCAL AUTHORITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES Autumn 2020**

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**Report by:** GwE Core Leads

**Subject:** GwE work programme and support to schools during the COVID Pandemic

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### **Purpose of the report**

To present a report to Local Authority scrutiny committees on how the regional consortium, in partnership with the Local Authorities, has evolved and adapted to support schools during the COVID pandemic.

### **Background, context and outline**

Staff in the Local Authorities and GwE have adapted their work in order to continue to provide effective services and support for all their school communities during the COVID pandemic. During this very difficult period, GwE have kept true to their vision and values as an organisation that is continually learning. The OECD's transversal themes of Trust, Thinking together, Time and Technology have remained at the heart of the work with schools and partners.

The service in its entirety has re focused several times during this period to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders. The ability to be flexible and agile and to work effectively together in different teams, often cross sector, has had significant impact on organisational behaviour and external perception. At the heart of the refocusing has been the need to ensure that the well-being of school leaders, their staff and learners is paramount to the decision-making and ensuring that the right level of support, operational or professional, can be directed accurately by the service. Regular contact with school leaders has been well received and has contributed to Head teachers feeling that they could turn to a professional colleague to share challenging issues and to find solutions to address day-to-day issues. These included operational discussions on opening school safely as well as professional discussions regarding distance and blended learning.

Weekly staff meetings have contributed to a consistency of approach in ensuring common messages to school teachers and leaders. There has been a strong emphasis on modelling appropriate and supportive behaviour throughout the period. This has included very regular contact with headteachers to ensure that they get the appropriate support to operate effectively and also as a sounding board to support their own well-being. Further support for senior leaders well-being has been provided through a series of workshops and webinars which will support their resilience during

this difficult period. GwE staff are also conducting face to face pastoral visits to schools during the autumn term on behalf of the Local Authorities.

GwE sees itself as a partnership organisation, especially with the Local Authorities and even more so during the lockdown period and in moving forward. GwE have worked effectively with Welsh Government on policy and continuity of learning. It has also worked consistently with the other regions and with Estyn in preparing guidance and resources for distance and blended learning and to provide advice on formative and continuous assessment. It has also strengthened the working relationship between those parties with positive professional exchanges, ensuring that the stakeholders are getting quality advice and resources.

One of the main strengths of work across North Wales has been the consistent messaging from the six local authorities through their political education portfolio holders and directors working with GwE to have one common message for the schools in North Wales. This consistency of messaging has been not only welcomed by schools but also by teacher unions and non-teaching unions who welcomed the clarity of messaging and support for their staff. One such example is the operational group of local authority and regional staff working on and developing risk assessments policy, advice and guidelines, and creating a regional dashboard which is a strong foundation for all schools to be able to reopen with risks being identified and locally managed and supported.

The six local authorities and GwE have taken a collegiate and collective regional approach to supporting schools throughout the COVID pandemic. This was clearly demonstrated in the consistent regional approach in developing a supportive framework to ensure that all regional schools had the right policies in place together with a comprehensive risk assessment in order to create a safe environment to welcome the children back into schools.

The framework included resources to support planning for:

- 1) Health and safety requirements
- 2) Site and facilities arrangements
- 3) Transport
- 4) Staffing arrangements
- 5) Blended teaching and learning
- 6) Inclusion and pupil support
- 7) Key management tasks.

Teamwork, joint working and collaboration has also been at the heart of the work with schools. All schools in the region are part of a cluster or a forum where they can come together to discuss operational issues as well as sharing best practice regarding distance and blended learning. This joint work facilitated by GwE staff has been very successful and sets a very strong infrastructure in place for future work and working relationship across the region.

One noteworthy aspect of the work has also been the bespoke nature of support for teachers and schools. GwE have worked on the strengths of individuals within the team and redeployed them where they have provided the maximum impact in their roles in supporting individual local authorities, schools, clusters, subject and phase networks. This bespoke provision of support based on strong principles of collaboration, exchanging and sharing and developing the best practice is a key learning principle that we will continue to develop in the next stages of evolving the service.

Schools who were causing concern prior to lockdown have had access to clear and targeted support to help them through this difficult period. This has been at several levels including network support, support to senior leadership and middle management in those schools and support with provision of

distance and blended learning. Schools that have found the lockdown and post lockdown period difficult due to staff having to self-isolate have been supported in various ways. This has included modelling of exemplar materials, webinars, shared materials and resources. Also, GwE staff directly leading, directly teaching in schools or providing distance learning to learners.

A lot of time and energy have been put in place to contact international experts and to research international practice to learn and establish the principles of effective distance and blended learning. Discussions with international colleagues including the OECD have also deepened thinking within the organisation. GwE have provided practical support for leaders to enable them to consider their whole school strategic planning of provision for distance and blended learning, refine and evaluate their evolving provision and consider planning for various scenarios where pupils may be in school and / or at home over the coming academic year. This has supported schools to have a better strategic overview of their provision.

GwE is also supporting schools in evaluating the quality of their blended learning and distance learning provision, sharing local examples and case studies of effective provision to reduce variation where it exists. Live streaming is developing well and enhancing the blended learning experience. Schools now realise that COVID will be with them for an extended period and are planning more strategically and effectively.

Self-evaluation and improvement processes have become an intrinsic part of the work of schools. As schools and settings are becoming more confident with the delivery of learning at a distance, so they will be better able to adapt their self-evaluation processes and tools to monitor, evaluate, review and revise if appropriate, the provision.

School leaders acknowledge that one of the greatest challenges to the delivery of blended and distance learning has been and continues to be ensuring that staff and pupils have the necessary skills' set and resources available to them. There has been a rapid pace of upskilling for some staff to move to digital platforms. Schools have undertaken a range of planned professional learning offered by regional consortia around the use of digital technology to support learning. This has also proved to be an opportunity as a greater number of practitioners are now able to confidently use an increasing range of technology to support learning.

Many schools acknowledge that parental engagement has been a key factor in securing effective distance/blended learning. GwE and the Local Authorities have provided a range of guidance to support school in improving parental engagement, including the sharing of good practice.

Many schools also acknowledge that there are ongoing operational challenges that change on a day-to-day basis, where a range of scenarios have to be planned for including cohorts of learners self-isolating or individual / small groups of learners and staff self-isolating. There are many examples of how schools are managing these complex situations well, having clear whole school strategies. GwE and the Local Authorities continue to support schools, using clusters and networks of schools to support each other and share resources and strategies.

GwE have also adopted a regional approach to accelerating learning, working on a tri-level approach which includes universal support led by the consortium, targeted support jointly led by the consortia and the local authority, with the acute being the responsibility of the local authority. This work has been developed on an evidence base approach working closely with Bangor University and regional staff to ensure a range of high-quality resources to support physical and emotional wellbeing, literacy and numeracy, these being made available to all learners across, all age range in all schools. The impact of this work will be captured through a regional dashboard which will include all grants made available to schools by Welsh Government during this financial year.

During the autumn term, GwE have provided opportunities for schools to form alliances or to work within developed clusters to address gaps in provision and alternative ways of delivery to meet any future lockdown scenarios. This work will:

- Identify, develop and share blended learning resources within the cluster/alliance and with other regional clusters/alliances;
- Ensure all identified and developed resources are submitted through their Supporting Improvement Adviser to be included on the GwE Support Centre;
- Support schools within the cluster with their provision to meet any future 'lockdown scenarios';
- Prioritise additional support for the secondary sector in preparation for the awarding of examination grades in 2021.

Schools in the GwE region will have a significant collection of resources for each age group.

The GwE Professional Offer for this academic year has been rationalised and concentrates on 5 main areas: Wellbeing, The Reform Journey, Developing the Workforce, Accelerating the Learning and Digital Learning. In addition, GwE will continue to facilitate cluster working to support the development of Curriculum for Wales, ALN Transformation and the Welsh Language.

During the COVID period GwE has continually reflected on the effectiveness of the work. Both internal and external resources have been used to ensure that we have a balanced perspective on the quality of the work. This has included working with the Education Development Trust and Steve Munby to develop the organisation and plan our future infrastructure.

### **Main outcomes and impact of the work**

- Effective collegiate and collective regional approach between the six local authorities and GwE.
- Joint working has ensured strong governance and regional consistency in support, messaging and guidance given to schools.
- Strengthened collaboration between peers at a cluster/forum level has ensured effective co-constructed strategic thinking and direction.
- Clear regional and local approach in place for effective repurposing of both the service and its schools.
- Schools are well informed and confident that effective support is available should any needs arise.
- School leaders' wellbeing supported through regular and clear communication.
- Clear guidance given on how to prioritise and structure both Distance and Blended Learning.
- Schools provided with coherent guidance and resources to effectively support vulnerable learners with their wellbeing, engagement and learning.
- Best practice being shared across schools and clusters, i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems, blended learning models, etc.

## Other outcomes and impact

- Effective communication provided via single point of contact (SIA) for school leaders and ease of access to support.
- Schools have been able to remain open to key workers in the event of staff shortages.
- Schools are well informed and confident that support is available should any needs arise. School leaders' wellbeing is supported through regular communication.
- Shared understanding of the importance of the welfare of pupils, parents and staff
- Clear guidance given on how to prioritise and structure both Distance and Blended Learning.
- Schools having access to a wealth of quality resources for reference as they plan for and deliver distance and blended learning.
- Comprehensive distance and blended learning models available for schools to adopt, adapt or refer to. This has in turn ensured strengthened leadership and improved balance of work that can be completed at home.
- Co-ordinated approach to supporting schools which has led to greater consistency and quality of distance and blended learning across the region.
- Best practice being shared across schools i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems etc.
- Strengthened use of ICT to enable effective communication between schools, within schools and with school stakeholders.
- School staff being upskilled through the use of a digital platform for professional development.
- Information shared with the LA is up to date and timely support is given to any School.
- In conjunction with the LA, ensured that the process of appointing school leadership candidates is appropriate and fair.
- Consistent messages disseminated to schools by GwE / LA officers.
- Strengthened collaboration between peers at a cluster level through digital means ensuring co-constructed strategic thinking.
- Strengthened collaboration between local authority officers and GwE.
- Clear regional and local approach in place for adapting schools for different purposes.
- Effective cascading of key messages to school staff to ensure consistency and clarity.
- Increased collaboration between regions and other stakeholders.
- Increased understanding of key messages and work streams.
- Stronger awareness amongst school leaders of effective strategies to ensure continuation of school business.
- Quality Professional Learning developed in readiness for future needs.
- Newly Qualified Teachers having clarity regarding completing their induction year.
- Strong partnership work with Bangor University to ensure initial teacher training students have clarity on the appointment system for next year.
- Strong partnership working with Caban to ensure increased research opportunities and recognition of excellence by School staff.

## Next Steps

1. Support schools to implement the recommendations of the Design and Delivery Board for the awarding of qualifications in summer 2021.
2. Continue to work closely in partnership with Local Authorities to support the wellbeing of Head teachers and school staff.
3. Deliver an effective professional learning offer to support schools to address immediate needs and to implement the Welsh Government reform journey

4. Continue to support clusters/alliances to plan for the continuity of learning so that they can effectively meet any future lockdown scenarios.
5. Strengthen the culture, behaviour, systems and processes so that leaders and teachers are incentivised to adopt a collegiate approach to school improvement.
6. Develop a regional qualitative framework for holistically capturing and evaluating progress in a school.

### **Supporting Documents**

- Appendix 1 – Summary of work undertaken
- Appendix 2 – Professional Learning Report
- Appendix 3 – Risk Assessment Dashboard
- Appendix 4 - Accelerating Learning Programme (ALP) Resources
- Appendix 5 - GwE Professional Offer 2020-21



## Summary of GwE work undertaken

### *Phase 1: Pre-lockdown*

- Communication strategy agreed with Directors of six local authorities.
- Regular phone contact with each school through SIA to support head teachers to keep schools open and assuage concerns.
- Deploy GwE staff in schools and PRUs where identified to support them to stay open.
- Deploy GwE staff in the authorities to support them with essential services.
- GwE teams upload initial resources to a designated Google classroom to support schools with initial planning for distance learning.

### *Phase 2: Supporting schools at the beginning of lockdown*

- Keeping regular contact with schools in order to ensure health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils.
- Continuing to support individual schools or Hubs when there was a shortage of staff to attend.
- Upskilling of GwE staff for digital learning.
- Developing guidance, support and learning resources for schools to begin to support distance learning in schools.
- Supporting schools with Digital Learning and producing useful 'How To' videos so that teachers can develop and vary their distance learning methodology.

### *Phase 3: Distance Learning (DL)*

- Developed distance learning guidance for schools in collaboration with other regions.
- Initially, google classrooms populated with appropriate materials and ideas for all Key Stages to refer to.
- Support to enable leaders and teachers to act in line with best practice in creating and using online learning resources.
- Effective DL Models were developed in GwE and were shared nationally and adopted by all regions.
- Schools, leaders and teachers were encouraged to share resources across the system and to encourage schools to use Hwb to share their approaches, plans and learning resources.
- Ensured all learners have an equitable access to learning and learning resources.
- All SIAs to have appropriate Professional Learning as to what makes effective DL.

### *Phase 4: Supporting schools to re-open*

- Joint work with 6 Local Authorities.
- Establish clear lines of communication with key stakeholders.
- Weekly meetings with Directors and Education portfolio holders.
- Created a Policy Framework and Dashboard.
- Modelled risk assessment for each sector.
- Regional and local roles identified in supporting vulnerable learners.
- Upskilled GwE staff to support school leadership in these areas.

### *Phase 5: Blended Learning*

- Upskilling of GwE team with international research on blended learning.
- Naturally blending Curriculum for Wales into current practice.
- Multi-disciplinary units to consolidate and develop skills.

- CAGs / Qualifications / Exams.

*Phase 6: Accelerating Learning / Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards (RRRS)*

- Regional approach to Accelerating Learning / RRRS – included Physical wellbeing; Emotional wellbeing and Literacy and numeracy.
- Evidence based approach based on research.
- Triangle of need – GwE leading the universal, GwE and Local Authorities targeted and Local Authorities leading the acute.

*Phase 7: Deepening collaboration and developing robust networks*

- Work within developed collaborations or opportunities to form alliances to address gaps in provision and alternative ways of delivery to meet any future lockdown scenarios.
- Clusters and alliances to identify the appropriate level of support which will be required for the different scenarios.
- Facilitate schools supporting each other in this time of crisis. Each cluster or alliance supporting each other by sharing plans and resources so that schools can respond to different operational scenarios that they might find themselves in.
- These resources will be collated regionally, ensuring a significant bank of quality resources for all age groups across the school system in North Wales.
- The aim of the work is to reduce workload and reduce pressure on schools.
- Provided rationalised Professional Offer to support clusters and individual schools.

**Resources available to schools as part of Accelerating Skills support materials.**

**Resource 1: Examples of Learning Sequences**

The **Accelerated Skills models** are extended teaching sequences that aim to help teachers focus on the isolated literacy and numeracy skills to ensure they have the necessary skills to access the whole curriculum at the appropriate level. They include isolated literacy skills such as oracy, higher order reading, writing/grammar/spelling, vocabulary building and money, multiplication, time and mathematical language, etc, in numeracy. They are designed to support learners to access the rest of their learning.

Each model is based on the Education Endowment Foundation recommended teaching sequence for a flexible approach to teaching and whole-school strategies, targeted support to accelerate learning and wider strategies (including supporting parents and carers). They can be adapted for use at home or school, a learner’s ability and age ranges and act as a model on which the teacher could further develop their own models.

Activities are designed to incorporate DCF and be based on a wider curriculum and learning in the outdoors, where appropriate, to motivate and continue to build learner well-being, independence and confidence.

Each model includes a voice-over briefing for teachers and a set of short videos for parents to help them support their children at home, should schools choose to share them.

They have been produced in both languages with contexts and reading materials selected to best reflect the culture and flavour of each language.

**Resources 2-5: Evidence reviews**

These four reviews provide a summary of the current evidence for a range of commonly used programmes and interventions. For each programme, a range of practical information useful for school leaders is presented, including information on efficacy, cost, training requirements and curriculum links.

<b>2</b>	Literacy programmes evidence review
<b>3</b>	Numeracy programmes evidence review
<b>4</b>	Behaviour & well-being programmes evidence review
<b>5</b>	Online programmes (literacy and numeracy) evidence review

**Resource 6: Teaching and fluency-building packages**

These packages build on a range of existing strategies and resources made available to schools via projects delivered by GwE and the Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (CIEREI), Bangor University. They focus on the use of evidence-informed teaching and fluency-building strategies to help pupils’ basic reading and reading fluency, reading comprehension and vocabulary skills and basic numeracy and numeracy fluency skills

The strategies have been identified as having a strong theoretical research base, alongside positive evidence from efficacy trials. They are all relatively simple to use at scale without the need for lengthy INSET training. They are also suitable for parents to use.



<b>6a</b>	Keeping Pupils Reading! (HEADSPROUTS, FP-KS2 parental support project)
<b>6b</b>	Repeated Reading & High Frequency Word Fluency strategies (KS2-3 currently being amended for Welsh language, bespoke Welsh texts being written)
<b>6c</b>	SAFMEDS numeracy strategy (KS2 parental support project)
<b>6d</b>	SAFMEDS numeracy strategy/Quizizz app (KS2-3)
<b>6e</b>	Remote Instruction for Literacy & Language (RILL - Currently being amended for Welsh language, bespoke Welsh texts being written)

### Resource 7: Secondary Literacy Offer

In the secondary sector it is essential that we further develop literacy skills across the curriculum in order for learners to unlock learning and acquire knowledge. The challenge of improving literacy skills is a particular priority for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The first package offered to schools is a digital Literacy Toolkit. The toolkit makes four key recommendations based on EEF research with each recommendation supported by practical examples which classroom teachers can adapt to support and enhance the literacy skills of their learners. A package of professional learners, again open to all classroom teachers across the region, accompanies the resource. The second package available to schools focusses on literacy intervention which is vital for identified learners across all ability ranges. An interactive literacy intervention programme, available in English and Welsh, has been developed and is available for schools to utilise. The programme can be used in school or at home as we recognise the importance of parental support in accelerating learning. Effective intervention also identifies learners early; uses assessment to target need and reviews impact regularly and the programme also supports schools in doing this. A comprehensive professional learning package for teachers or teaching assistants has also been developed in order to support schools in ensuring effective implementation.

### Resource 8: Secondary numeracy packages

*These resources are a package that will enable secondary colleagues to support the numeracy drive within the school. Resources included are suitable for use within the classroom (including cross-curricular links), for learners working away from school and for parents to support the learners. Where possible the resources are evidence-based and include a range of learning resources that can be used for different learners' needs as and when appropriate.*

<b>8a</b>	Universal support materials	<b>KS3</b>
<b>i</b>	<p>Organisation of the numeracy curriculum for years 7-9 to prioritise aspects of the curriculum. This includes the combining of topics that can be taught together to create the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links between the current framework and the new curriculum.</li> <li>• Topics organised into progression ladders to provide resources for all ability ranges at KS3.</li> <li>• Topics linked to the other projects – SAFMEDS and iSTer where appropriate.</li> </ul>	

<b>8a ii</b>	<p>Universal support materials Materials to support teachers to guide learners with independent and distance learning. The resources include a toolkit which is suitable for learners, learners with parental support, learners with non-specialist support, learners' under teachers' direction. The toolkit includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnostic questions – to be completed at the beginning and end of the series of learning opportunities.</li> <li>• Lesson that can be followed, including supporting video clips and examples.</li> <li>• Tasks to be completed and self-marked so that learners can assess their own development.</li> </ul>	<b>KS3</b>
<b>8a iii</b>	<p>Universal support materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials supported from the Maths.Cymru website to enable free and easy access for all teachers, learners and their parents/guardians.</li> <li>• Promotion of the brand 'Maths.Cymru' as a one-stop shop for supporting materials.</li> <li>• Specific areas targeted for KS3 within the website (with an area for KS4 which learners will need to access as they progress through the school).</li> <li>• Release of materials over the next two terms with different stakeholder groups.</li> </ul>	<b>KS3- KS4</b>
	<p>Targeted support package to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources to support the workforce, to support personalised learning, additional support materials and for supporting the parental role in the learning.</li> </ul>	<b>KS3</b>
<b>8b i</b>	<p>Targeted support materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and develop a package that Senior leaders within schools can use to develop the workforce in order to accelerate the learning for all.</li> </ul>	<b>KS3</b>
<b>8b ii</b>	<p>Targeted support materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a professional learning package to support senior learners to develop the personalised learning experiences in order to accelerate learning for all.</li> </ul>	<b>KS3</b>
<b>8b iii</b>	<p>Targeted support materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a professional learning package to support SLT/AENCO/ Numeracy Coordinators to develop the workforce within the school to further invest in small group numeracy intervention.</li> </ul>	<b>KS3</b>
<b>8b iv</b>	<p>Targeted support materials Develop a range of resources that can support the sessions that schools may choose to deliver to the wider community in order to strengthen links with parents and the wider community to support numeracy development</p>	<b>KS3</b>

<b>8c</b>	<p>iSTeR Development Retrieval &amp; Spaced practice strategies for maths (KS3-4) developed alongside the work with Bangor University to further support the development of topics considered in 8a and 8b.</p>	<b>KS3</b>
<b>8d</b>	<p>SAFMEDS Development Materials developed as a collaboration between Bangor University, KS2 and KS3 colleagues. Linked to the developments of topics considered in 8a and 8b where appropriate.</p>	KS3



# Professional Offer

## 2020-2021





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# PROFESSIONAL OFFER

This year has been a difficult year, which has highlighted how incredibly flexible you as headteachers and schools can be when responding to all the COVID-19 challenges you have had to face. Following discussions with several of you, the GwE offer will reflect this flexibility and be available to you at a time that is convenient to you.

We will discuss with you in your catchment areas in order to identify aspects that have priority, and then we will do our utmost to respond to these needs in a flexible manner to suit you as schools.

The offer this year is condensed under five main headings, namely:

- **WELL-BEING**
- **THE REFORM JOURNEY:**
  - Curriculum for Wales
  - ALN
  - The Welsh Language
- **DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE:**
  - Teaching Assistants
  - Leadership
  - Foundation Phase, Literacy & Numeracy, Subjects
- **ACCELERATING LEARNING**
- **DIGITAL**

What follows will give you a high-level idea of the Professional Learning offered by GwE during this academic year. It is not in its final form, but it gives you a flavour to assist you to identify the Professional Learning needs of your school and your staff in the near future. We will work with you as schools to identify the best time to deliver the Professional Learning; therefore, times and dates are not included in this high-level offer. GwE will also work closely with you as schools in order to continue to deepen the Peer work already established, and to identify the aspects that you as schools could offer to other schools to develop specific aspects of Professional Learning.



# WELL-BEING



## Dealing with attachment and trauma difficulties in Educational Settings

**Provider Name(s):** Trauma Informed Schools - Dr Coral Harper

**Brief Description:**

- Suitable for all school staff, although targeting Designated Teachers for LAC / Head of Pastoral Care / Well-being / ALNCo
- 3 hour online PLO delivered in 2 x 90 minute sessions
- To provide an introduction to developmental Trauma and Attachment via evidence based research with focus on developing a whole schools approach
- To support all attendees to identify strategies within teaching and learning to help learners within their school setting

## Biophilia: The Science of Nature & Animals: Why being outside makes us happier, healthier and better able to learn

**Provider Name(s):** Dr Coral Harper, Independent Education and Mental Health Consultant

**Brief Description:**

This three-hour (or 2 x 90 minute) online PLO will support school to developing their understanding of Biophilia in regards to regulating in Nature

- Understanding the beneficial (brain) chemistry of Nature Hard & Soft Fascination
- Incorporating learning into practice –Activities to support emotional well-being in the outdoors
- Risk/Benefit Assessment

## Developing Self-Regulation Zones in primary settings

**Provider Name(s):** Dr Janet Rose / Nia Thomas – GwE

**Brief Description:**

- This workshop is designed to accompany the Emotion Coaching workshop and will be delivered in English with bilingual resources
- The workshop will focus particular attention on strategies that enable children to develop more effective skills in regulating their feelings and behaviour so that they can focus on their schoolwork. The workshop will offer participants a number of different strategies that can be easily implemented in their classrooms
- The strategies all help children to learn to regulate their stress response system, their feelings and their behaviour and help to build emotional literacy



## Supporting the Education of Children who are Looked After across the Region

**Provider Name(s): Sharon Williams, GwE**

**Brief Description:**

- The 45 minute session can be delivered in Welsh / English and is suitable for all staff who are supporting children who are looked after – but with focus on NQTs / Designated Lead
- The workshop will focus on - What does it mean to be ‘looked after’? / The role of the school and LA in supporting LAC pupils
- Raising aspirations of children who are looked after and consider the impact of early childhood trauma and attachment difficulties in education and universal support to implement
- Support, processes and procedures e.g. Personal Education Plans

## Developing a Whole School Approach to Well-being

**Provider Name(s): Sharon Williams, GwE**

**Brief Description:**

The 60-minute session can be delivered in English / Welsh and suitable for all settings.

- The session will focus on universal Well-being and reference evidence based research / national strategies in regards to the whole school approach.
- It will focus on the key principles / considerations and practices for schools that are beneficial for all learners.
- Information will also be shared on the Well-being Accelerating Learning evidence database and signposting to further guidance

## The Right Way – A Children’s Rights Approach in Wales

**Provider Name(s): Children’s Commissioner for Wales / GwE**

**Brief Description:**

The workshop is suitable for all settings and can be delivered in Welsh / English – the session will be between 60 – 90 minutes.

- The focus will be on the introduction to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and how they can be applied within school in regards to the 4 purposes within CfW and in addition learner voice.
- The workshop will also allow you to have the status of Train the Trainer and cascade across your school / cluster.

## The Observational Checklist

**Provider Name(s):** Helen Worrall, Education Consultant/ Author

**Brief Description:**

- Participants will, via a summary of Attachment Theory, be able to understand how early experiences, particularly those related to neglect, trauma and loss, negatively impact the ability to form positive relationships with others and how this impacts upon their well-being, behaviour and needs within our schools
- Participants will become familiar with the range of resources contained with each of the observation checklist books and their intended uses
- Participants will develop an understanding of how the Observational Checklist for each of the age groups is structured, how it is completed and how it can be interpreted to inform understanding of need and to inform planning
- Participants will understand how the checklist can be used as an effective method to monitor and observe change in a child or young person's emotional well-being and as such can be used as a resource that shows progress and efficacy of interventions put into place as a result of increased understanding

## Thinking Differently for Disadvantaged Learners

**Provider Name(s):** Challenging Education

**Brief Description:**

- The Professional Learning Programme (PLP) is based around six recorded training modules released half-termly throughout the academic year and available to all staff (and governors) to access at their own convenience. They are suitable for all schools / settings
- Each training module will be divided into a series of short video sessions (viewable online only) and a number of these will be accompanied by additional reading and/or reflective worksheets that can be downloaded. There is also the opportunity to join in a live feedback session as well
- Settings will be given access to the modules via GwE up to 31st August 2021.
- The focus will be supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged youngsters and includes: What it is like to be disadvantaged in school; the impact of the curriculum; Adapting teaching and effectively using metacognitive strategies; addressing the difficulties of participation; Teaching appropriate learning behaviours and career-related learning



## Family and community engagement - FaCE

**Provider Name(s):** GwE

**Brief Description:**

- The workshop is suitable for all settings and can be delivered in Welsh / English
- The workshop will focus on the Welsh Government FaCE toolkit that is designed to provide practical support for schools with an overview of the 5 key themes in regards to parental and community engagement
- The workshop will also focus on practical examples from schools across the region in regards to embedding a whole school approach to family engagement and family voice
- The workshop will also share / signpost to further guidance in regards to evidence based programmes / provision

## How do we Measure Well-being? – The Conversation

**Provider Name(s):** GwE

**Brief Description:**

- The 60 minute workshop can be delivered in Welsh/English
- The focus of the workshop is to give schools / settings an overview of the universal range of evidence based “well-being” measures /tools
- There will be practical examples of what schools have used and its impact to date, we will also link with the 6 local authorities in regards to targeted learner support

## Bloom – for Young People’s Mental Health & Resilience

**Provider Name(s):** Mental Health UK (Hafal Cymru)

**Brief Description:**

- Bloom is a free resource for schools, to equip learners in KS4/post 16 with the tools and knowledge to maintain good mental health and well-being - <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/partnerships/projects/bloom/>
- The online training is available in both Welsh/English as well as the resources / lesson plans/student workbook
- The programme includes six key topics – What is Resilience? Exam Stress / Making decisions / Managing Studies/Social pressures and friendships
- Following the training schools can then have practical support via Hafal Cymru in regards to delivering in school

## Foundation Phase Network – Autumn Term. Focus – Health and Well-being. Effective strategies to support the learning

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

### **Brief Description:**

- Schematic behaviour. What is a schema? How to support schematic behaviour. Aligns with early progression steps Curriculum for Wales
- Trauma – ACEs. Case study on effective strategies that can be used with all pupils to deal with anxiety and trauma
- Information about on-line assessments
- Recording available within the ‘Webinars’ section of GwE Support Centre

## Well-being across the Curriculum for NQTs

**Provider Name(s):** Ieuan Jones

### **Brief Description:**

- Ensure that the well-being of all learners is of the highest priority in all schools across the region
- Ensure that all learners maximise their full learning potential and become healthy, confident individuals who build their emotional well-being
- Ensure that teachers understand that developing physical health and well-being has lifelong benefits
- Promote that all schools have a healthy and safe environment that embraces a holistic approach to well-being and that all learners feel safe and free from abuse

## Embedding the VESPA Programme in Schools

**Provider Name(s):** Martyn Froggett

### **Brief Description:**

- Training continuing for schools involved in the programme and opportunities to train for those not involved. Training will be focussed on development for VESPA Champions and existing and potential programme deliverers (costs: resources £4000; training £700)

## Head teacher well-being workshops

**Provider Name(s):** Claire Chidley - an experienced and highly regarded expert in the area - will facilitate the workshops

### **Brief Description:**

- A one off 'live' workshop focusing on a variety of aspects of Head teachers' personal well-being e.g. resilience, adapting to a changing environment, personal reflection etc. The programme will be launched during November 2020
- Following this, there would be a series of bite-size webinars, which will be recorded, focusing on various themes and aspects of well-being and resilience. In addition to this there will be pre and post reading materials and exercises for school leaders to engage with. Schools can partake in these sessions on a flexible basis and use them within their own schools if they wish
- Peer to peer engagement and support will be key throughout the offer with opportunities to engage with peers from within individual school senior leadership teams and / or with school leaders from other schools
- There will be an opportunity for groups of schools to come together to further explore bespoke aspects of personal, collective and institutional well-being. This could be clusters of primary schools or groups of secondary schools







# THE REFORM JOURNEY



# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## CURRICULUM FOR WALES

### Change Management

**Provider Name(s):** Ruth Thackray and Euros Davies

**Brief Description:**

- A practical and compelling session to support schools with leading and planning change through the reform journey.
- What is Change Management and how to go about managing change?
- An opportunity to work with colleagues in small groups to discuss various situations.
- The Professional Learning is split into two sessions of approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes.

### Developing a Shared Vision

**Provider Name(s):** Ruth Thackray and Euros Davies

**Brief Description:**

- Working with stakeholders to develop a vision for Curriculum for Wales
- What is your current vision? Does it need to be amended/updated?
- How will you ensure this is a vision for the whole community and your stakeholders?
- How to develop a shared vision during COVID-19

### System Expectations

**Provider Name(s):** Ruth Thackray and Euros Davies

**Brief Description:**

- Discussion and making sense of expectations for the journey to September 2022
- An informal session with ample time to ask questions and express views
- Useful for schools to be able to map out the journey to September 2022
- Identify where Curriculum for Wales is in the wider reform journey



# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## Blended Learning, Accelerating Learning and Curriculum for Wales

**Provider Name(s):** Ruth Thackray and Euros Davies

**Brief Description:**

- Identify and prepare for scenarios and challenges that arise due to COVID-19
- Identify examples of how this work can help us to prepare for CfW.
- What are the links between these aspects?
- Opportunities to reflect

## Understanding a Curriculum that is driven by the Purposes

**Provider Name(s):** Ruth Thackray and Euros Davies

**Brief Description:**

- Develop and understand concepts within Curriculum for Wales and how to plan curriculum change
- Understand the concepts underpinning a Curriculum that is driven by Purposes

## Pedagogy

**Provider Name(s):** GwE CfW team

**Brief Description:**

- A series of short sessions looking at what makes effective Pedagogy
- Link with Schools as Learning Organisations and the role of research
- Link with the Professional Learning Standards

## Creating space and time for Professional Learning

**Provider Name(s):** GwE CfW team

**Brief Description:**

- An opportunity to look at effective professional learning for all members of staff and how it supports the Reform Journey
- Discuss effective methods and examples of creating space and time for Professional Learning
- Identify the PL that is available in terms of the reform journey and how to benefit from it as a school and catchment area



# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## Welsh Curriculum Update for NQTs

**Provider Name(s):** Ieuan Jones

**Brief Description:**

- Focus on the “What matters Statements”, the “Principles of progress” and the “Learning descriptions”
- Teachers have the opportunity to develop aspects of the curriculum itself, enabling its learners to develop towards the four purposes of the curriculum
- Share best practice in teaching in the Foundation Phase, KS2 and KS3

## How to provide a developmentally appropriate holistic and integrated curriculum into lower KS2

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- Sharing ideas and learning experiences
- How to plan using authentic context in a holistic way
- Suitable for senior leaders, foundation phase and Year 3 and 4 teachers and teaching assistants

Following the live webinar, a recording will be available within the ‘Webinars’ section on GwE Support Centre

## Embedding the 12 pedagogical principles into everyday practices

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- How to effectively plan the learning environment
- How the provision is used effectively to widen children’s literacy, numeracy and digital skills
- Develop and understand theories and research about child development and learning relevant to planning and everyday practice
- Suitable for senior leaders, foundation phase and Year 3 and 4 teachers and teaching assistants

Following the live webinar, a recording will be available within the ‘Webinars’ section on GwE Support Centre.



# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## Developing mathematical and numeracy skills in the outdoor provision

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- Focus: sharing ideas on how to develop pupils' mathematical and numeracy skills outdoors through a range of rich learning experiences (many of the activities linked to the topic of 'Christmas' and the use of natural resources and loose parts). Sharing ideas how to develop maths and numeracy skills, which can be adapted to your current situation.
- Activities to support overall development of personal and social skills and their well-being.
- Suitable for Nursery – Year 2 teachers and TAs

Following the live webinar, a recording will be available within the 'Webinars' section on GwE Support Centre.

## Heads of English Network Meetings (once per half term)

**Provider Name(s):** Gaynor Murphy, Anna Lloyd Williams and Louise Usher

**Brief Description:**

- Further develop standards of teaching and learning
- Develop approaches to effective blended learning
- Further strengthen quality of leadership
- Create opportunities to share best practice and develop approaches to CFW



# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS [ALN]

### Differentiation – Mike Gershon

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team

**Brief Description:**

- Video 1: Defining Differentiation and Layering Up
- Video 2: Scaffolding, Modelling and Working Memory
- Video 3: Using Taxonomies to Differentiate
- Video 4: Feedback and Metacognition

### Managing Difficult Conversations

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team & online virtual presenter Nicola S Morgan

**Brief Description:**

- How to handle challenging conversations using an 8-Step blueprint that will help you feel more prepared, communicate confidently and stay in control of the situation and yourself
- 2.5-hour session

### Dealing with Challenging Situations Effectively

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team & online virtual presenter Nicola S Morgan

**Brief Description:**

- Develop specific strategies for conflict resolution
- Practice communication skills
- Develop Influencing and negotiation skills to facilitate resolutions
- 2.5-hour session



# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## Welsh Government Eliesha Level 1 e-learning

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team

**Brief Description:**

- What is the new ALN system?
- Identifying additional learning needs
- Roles and key responsibilities

## Working with Parents

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team & e-learning presenter Samantha Garner

**Brief Description:**

- Looking at the challenges faced when working with parents and how we can build effective positive relationships to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people

## Inclusivity in Education

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team & online virtual presenter Nicola S Morgan

**Brief Description:**

- What is inclusivity and how can we promote it within our setting and within our individual working practices?

## One-Page Profiles Top Tips

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team & e-learning presenter Ben Rosamond

**Brief Description:**

- What is a one-page profile?
- How can they help us to support children and young people better?



# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## Quality First Teaching

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team & e-learning presenter Samantha Garner

**Brief Description:**

- What is quality first teaching and how can we achieve it?

## Using multi-sensory teaching to support ALN children and young people

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team

**Brief Description:**

- Why we do not all learn the same way?
- How we can plan and evaluate our practice to ensure we are reaching all students, not just those who learn how we teach

## Person-Centred Reviews

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team & e-learning presenter Ben Rosamond

**Brief Description:**

- What is a Person-Centred Review?
- How can Person-Centred Reviews help us to support children and young people better?

## Person-Centred Thinking for Everyone

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team & e-learning by Helen Sanderson Associates

**Brief Description:**

- Begin or add to your understanding of what being person-centred means; the person-centred thinking tools will give you some practical ways to help people take control of their lives and support





# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## Developing Effective Outcomes and Using the Support Sequence

**Provider Name(s):** Regional ALN Transformation Team

**Brief Description:**

- Session 1 – Preparation (learning what matters, who matters and where matters)
- Session 2 – The Outcomes Sequence (writing effective person-centred outcomes)
- Session 3 – The Support System (checking solutions and problem solving)
- Each delegate will need to complete every session (3 sessions = 7.5 hours) (Online virtual training)



# THE REFORM JOURNEY

## THE WELSH LANGUAGE

### Literacy in the New Curriculum for Wales

**Provider Name(s):** GwE Welsh Language Team

**Brief Description:**

- Networks/ clusters across the region working together to create new cross-curricular resources
- Support and build on schemes that are already operational and successful
- Provide guidance on how to place the New Curriculum as a focus for the further development of Literacy within individual departments plans or within cross-school areas of learning

### Offering opportunities for teachers to work on cross-regional/national projects

**Provider Name(s):** GwE Welsh Language Team

**Brief Description:**

- Projects in progress for KS3 and KS4
- Invitation for teachers to join the projects panel
- The direction of the projects will be determined by the project panel

### Bilingual Teaching Methods

**Provider Name(s):** GwE Welsh Language Team

**Brief Description:**

- A quick guide for educators based on International research into bilingual teaching methods, led by Professor Enlli Thomas of Bangor University
- Contains a brief overview of the international literature, relating those practices to an educational context here in Wales
- The booklet has been produced to coincide with the Welsh in Education and Bilingualism Conference (October / November 2018) and is supported by Welsh and English YouTube videos of the conference





# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## TEACHING ASSISTANTS

### Induction Programme for New Teaching Assistants (digital)

**Provider Name(s):** Teaching Assistants' Learning Pathway

**Brief Description:**

- To understand the role of a teaching assistant and how to develop professionally
- To understand how policies and frameworks impact the teaching assistant's role
- To embrace the changes and consider relevance in their own settings

### Aspiring HLTA Programme Cylch 1 (Modules 2, 3 and 4)

**Provider Name(s):** Teaching Assistants' Learning Pathway

**Brief Description:**

- To understand the requirements of the HLTA status and role, and prepare for HLTA assessment
- To develop understanding regarding their professional impact on learners
- To understand how policies and frameworks impact the HLTA's role, embrace the current national changes and consider relevance in their own settings
- To establish and improve professional networks and collaborations of teaching assistants within schools and between schools

### Aspiring HLTA Programme Cylch 2 (Modules 1 - 4)

**Provider Name(s):** Teaching Assistants' Learning Pathway

**Brief Description:**

- To understand the requirements of the HLTA status and role, and prepare for HLTA assessment
- To develop understanding regarding their professional impact on learners
- To understand how policies and frameworks impact the HLTA's role, embrace the current national changes and consider relevance in their own settings
- To establish and improve professional networks and collaborations of teaching assistants within schools and between schools



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## Teaching Assistants / HLTAs – Supporting & Progressing Numeracy in KS2

**Provider Name(s):** Manon Davies

**Brief Description:**

- Practical classroom based support strategies for supporting the development of learners numeracy skills
- Introduction to evidence based research to further develop subject knowledge and understanding
- Suitable for all levels of TA and HLTA

## Teaching Assistants / HLTAs – Supporting and Progressing Literacy in KS2

**Provider Name(s):** Vicky Lees

**Brief Description:**

- Practical classroom based support strategies for supporting the development of oracy, reading and writing skills
- Introduction to evidence based research to further develop subject knowledge and understanding
- Suitable for all levels of TA and HLTA



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## LEADERSHIP

### Middle Leaders Development Programme

**Provider Name(s):** A national programme run by the regional consortia and delivery partners

**Brief Description:**

- This one-year leadership development programme is available to all middle leaders across Wales who have areas of responsibility and/or line management of staff
- A practical, cross-phase, development programme, using a blended delivery model
- The programme will aim to: develop a participant's leadership skills and the school's leadership capacity; improve experiences for pupils and raise standards
- Accreditation options are offered, in partnership with UWTSD and Bangor Universities

### Senior Leaders Development Programme

**Provider Name(s):** A national programme run by the regional consortia and delivery partners

**Brief Description:**

- This one-year leadership development programme is available to all senior leaders across Wales who have overall responsibility for an aspect of leadership across an establishment
- The programme seeks to maximise e-learning opportunities and technology through all learning, research and instructional content being made available digitally. This will be the primary method of collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning
- The programme promotes highly effective leadership through self-evaluation and reflection, exploring the relationships between leadership, successful schools and the wider community
- The delivery of the programme includes mentoring, peer support networks and an individual leadership standards self-review



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## National Aspiring Headteachers Development Programme – preparing for NPQH

**Provider Name(s):** A national assessment and development programme run by the regional consortia on behalf of Welsh Government

### **Brief Description:**

- This one-year development programme is an exciting professional learning opportunity for experienced school leaders across Wales who wish to become head teachers in the near future. Completion of this programme is an expectation for all future NPQH applicants
- The programme promotes highly effective leadership through self-evaluation and reflection, exploring the relationships between leadership, successful schools and the wider community. It will ensure equity of access to practitioners across Wales and an increase in the number of high-quality applicants for headteacher posts in schools
- The programme will enable participants to reflect on their own professional practice and to ensure they are well prepared when applying to undertake formal assessment for the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH)
- The programme takes place over a one-year period and requires a commitment of the equivalent of five days between January and December. It may be delivered through a blended learning model

## Newly Appointed and Acting Headteachers Development Programme

**Provider Name(s):** A national programme, run by the regional consortia and their delivery partners

### **Brief Description:**

- This two-year programme is available for every Headteacher in their first substantive or acting post throughout Wales
- The programme offers: Development Days in Leadership; support from Leadership Coaches and networking opportunities
- It aims to allow Headteachers who are new to their roles continue to develop and to benefit from a support structure and peer networking
- Accreditation options are offered, in partnership with UWTSO and Bangor Universities



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## Experienced Headteachers Development Programme

**Provider Name(s):** A national leadership development programme, run by the regional consortia and their delivery partners

**Brief Description:**

- This two-year programme is a professional learning opportunity for experienced headteachers and has been created to enable headteachers to reflect on their current performance and determine their next steps in ensuring effective leadership
- It will provide each participant with personally tailored challenges and support; time to discuss ideas, theories and leadership tools; and the opportunity to benefit from and to help others successfully fill the role
- The programme promotes highly effective leadership through self-evaluation and reflection, exploring the relationships between leadership, successful schools and the wider community
- There is an opportunity for accreditation in partnership with Trinity St David's (Yr Athrofa) and Bangor University for those participants wishing to undertake such a route

## Post-16 Leadership Programme - Day 4

**Provider Name(s):** Cross-Consortia – Post-16 Leadership Development programme

**Brief Description:**

- Completion of course from 2019-20
- For delegates who completed the earlier part of the programme
- Two 90-minute sessions on 25 November/ 3 December. Delegates should attend both sessions

## Coaching and Mentoring Programme

**Provider Name(s):** Ieuan Jones and Bethan Cartwright

**Brief Description:**

- A series of workshops for heads and/or SLT looking at further developing Coaching and Mentoring skills
- Equip attendees with strategies and models to support effective motivation and mentoring as motivation is embedded within the organisation
- Interactive workshops with plenty of time for discussion in breakout rooms and some role play to develop understanding





# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## FOUNDATION PHASE, LITERACY & NUMERACY, SUBJECTS

### Observing against the Compact Profile

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- The importance of the observation cycle
- Making observations against the compact profile to identify and plan next steps in their learning
- Recording available within the 'Webinars' section of GwE Support Centre

### Practitioners facilitating and supporting the learning in Foundation Phase

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- Effective questioning, including questions to develop numerical reason, questions to develop pupils' ability to reflect and to extend their responses and thinking
- Blank level of questioning
- Strategies to develop independent learners

Cluster sessions to be arranged on request through the School Improvement Adviser

### Foundation Phase Termly Networks

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- Local, regional and national issues regarding foundation phase will be discussed and a 'good practice case study' will be delivered
- Dates will be shared via the GwE bulletin, GwE twitter page and GwE cynradd twitter feed
- Following the live webinar, a recording will be available within the 'Webinars' section on GwE Support Centre



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## Literacy and numeracy termly network meetings

**Provider Name(s):** Manon Davies and Vicky Lees

**Brief Description:**

- Facilitation of regional and local networks for Literacy and Numeracy subject leaders
- Specific focus on collaborating and sharing best practice, effective teaching of Literacy and Numeracy, explore a range of reliable evidence and pedagogical approaches to develop the new curriculum
- Develop distributed leadership through up skilling and empowering all staff leading in Literacy/Numeracy

## Literacy and Numeracy: Designing your Curriculum in KS2

**Provider Name(s):** Manon Davies and Vicky Lees

**Brief Description:**

- Sharing ideas for how to effectively plan the development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills, as you design your curriculum
- Effective use of the indoor and outdoor learning environment
- Suitable for all leaders, teachers and support staff

## English teacher Forums (open to all teachers, once per half term)

**Provider Name(s):** Gaynor Murphy, Anna Lloyd Williams and Louise Usher

**Brief Description:**

- Further develop standards of teaching and learning – subject specific priority every half term
- Create opportunities for teachers to share and collaborate
- Create opportunities to share best practice

## Heads of Mathematics Network Meetings (once per term)

**Provider Name(s):** Delyth Ellis and Sian Caldwell

**Brief Description:**

- Further develop standards of teaching and learning
- Develop approaches to effective blended learning
- Further strengthen quality of leadership
- Create opportunities to share best practice
- Develop approaches to CFW

# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## Mathematics Teacher Forums (open to all teachers, once per term)

**Provider Name(s):** Delyth Ellis and Sian Caldwell

**Brief Description:**

- Further develop standards of teaching and learning – subject specific priority every term
- Create opportunities for teachers to share and collaborate
- Create opportunities to share best practice

## Numeracy Coordinator Networks (once per half term)

**Provider Name(s):** Delyth Ellis and Sian Caldwell

**Brief Description:**

- Improve provision for Numeracy across the school based on the EEF's key recommendations
- Improve skills of workforce
- Utilise QA support in order to identify areas of best practice

## Introducing / re-igniting International Languages in the primary curriculum

**Provider Name(s):** Global Futures GwE MFL/ INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES- Primary

**Brief Description:**

- Sharing good practice: GwE Primary Lead schools
- International Languages and Covid
- Practical and ready to use resources
- Support from the Team

## Power Language: introduction and update

**Provider Name(s):** Power Language - Primary

**Brief Description:**

- National conference/presentation by Power language director: Richard Tallaron
- Overview of the website and the resources/ plans for IL in primary schools
- Training opportunities and customised resources and plans
- For non-specialist teachers in the primary



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## Pedagogical principle in MFL- part 1: Challenge

**Provider Name(s):** Global Futures GwE MFL + Ariane Laumonier (Institut français) - Secondary Sector

**Brief Description:**

- Aimed at NQT and non-specialist teachers but also good review to plan for the New Curriculum
- Defining challenge and how to achieve it: the theory
- Practical examples and resources
- DATE: WEEK OF 30TH November

## Pedagogical principle in MFL- part 1: Retrieval

**Provider Name(s):** Pedagogical principle in MFL- part 1: Retrieval

**Brief Description:**

- Retrieval practices to address the gap in knowledge due to lockdown period
- Develop pupils' confidence and proficiency
- Hub leaders to share good practice
- Discussion and practical examples

## Pedagogical principle in MFL- part 3: Blended learning

**Provider Name(s):** Global Futures GwE MFL- Secondary Sector

**Brief Description:**

- BL approach in practice: sharing good practice - Hub leaders
- BL to be exam-ready: ideas and examples
- Discussion and practical examples
- All teachers
- Support from the Team

## Heads of Science Network Meetings (once per term, more frequently if required)

**Provider Name(s):** Nicola Jones, Beverly Humphreys-Jones, Huw Smith

**Brief Description:**

- Improve the quality of Teaching and learning in the current climate (Blended, distant, live streaming)
- Develop approaches to effective planning for learning
- Continue to develop leadership at all levels and create opportunities to share best practice
- Improve understanding of the CFW and curriculum planning for 2022



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

**Science surgeries** (open to all teachers, once per half term)

**Provider Name(s):** TBC

**For each of the following qualifications:**

- Level 3 Medical Science
- GCSE Applied Science
- GCSE Biology (Separate & Double awards)
- GCSE Chemistry (Separate & Double awards)
- GCSE Physics (Separate & Double awards)

**Brief Description:**

- Share updates from WJEC
- Share best practice from schools that have successfully introduced/delivered the qualification
- Provide a platform for teachers to discuss and concerns, ask questions and support each other

**Science Teaching and Learning networks** (open to all teachers – once per half term)

**Provider Name(s):** Nicola Jones, Beverly Humphreys-Jones, Huw Smith

**Brief Description:**

- Further develop the quality of teaching and learning and effective planning for learning – subject specific priority every half term
- Create opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practice
- Creating opportunities to promote and develop a STEM approach and to build learners' 'Science Capital'
- Improve understanding of the CFW and curriculum planning for 2022

**Familiarisation with resources to support Welsh literacy in KS2**

**Provider Name(s):** GwE Welsh Language Team

**Brief Description:**

- An introduction to the nationally developed resources
- Details what is available to develop speaking and listening, reading and writing throughout KS2
- Highlighting the digital tools available through Hwb to further enrich and extend the activities and support blended learning



# DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

## GwE Welsh Language Training Directory

**Provider Name(s):** Various

**Brief Description:**

- A directory referring to the provision for developing the Welsh language skills of the workforce in North Wales
- It directs the workforce to National provision e.g. the National Centre for Learning Welsh, and what is offered locally by the individual authorities

## Network meetings – Heads of 6th Form

**Provider Name(s):** Martyn Froggett/ Christine Wynne / Elfed Morris

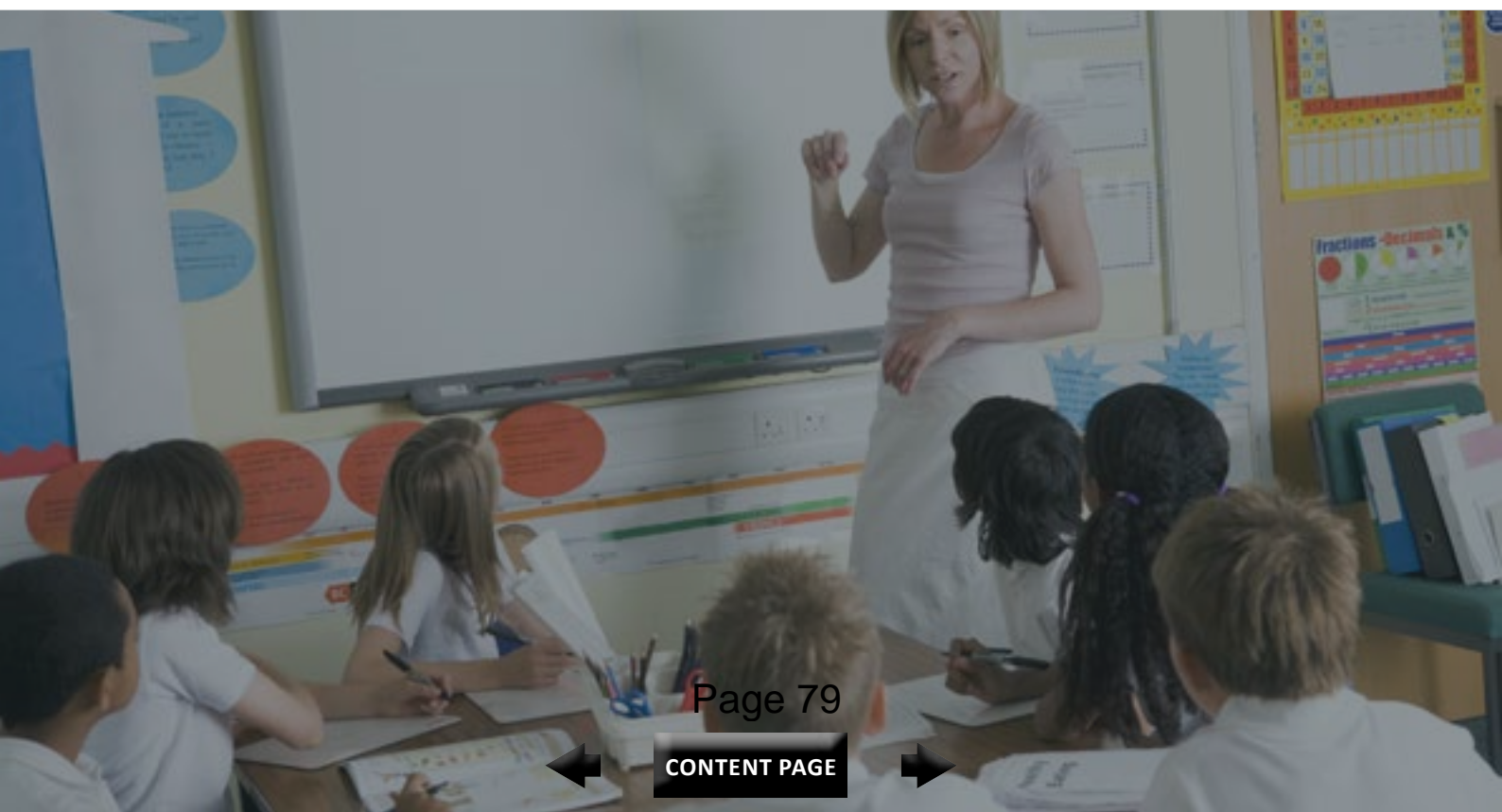
**Brief Description:**

- Termly meetings for Heads of 6th Form to exchange thoughts around current issues such as UCAS/ well-being/ blended learning
- Specific input on topics from speakers/ guests to be provided as needed





# ACCELERATING LEARNING



# ACCELERATING LEARNING

## Literacy across the Curriculum for NQTs

**Provider Name(s):** Ieuan Jones

**Brief Description:**

- Ensure that learners have relevant high-level literacy skills
- Support NQTs to identify and provide opportunities for pupils to develop literacy skills across the curriculum
- Share best practice in teaching in the Foundation Phase, KS2 and KS3
- Effectively develop the literacy skills of all learners across the curriculum

## Numeracy across the Curriculum for NQTs

**Provider Name(s):** Ieuan Jones

**Brief Description:**

- Ensure that learners have relevant high level numeracy skills
- Support NQTs to identify and provide opportunities for pupils to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum
- Share best practice in teaching in the Foundation Phase, KS2 and KS3
- Effectively develop the numeracy skills of all learners across the curriculum

## Literacy Leader Networks [once per half term]

**Provider Name(s):** Gaynor Murphy, Anna Lloyd Williams and Louise Usher

**Brief Description:**

- Improve provision for Literacy across the school based on the EEF's key recommendations
- Improve skills of workforce
- Utilise QA support in order to identify areas of best practice

## Accelerate Literacy for all Classroom Teachers and Teaching Assistants

[once per term]

**Provider Name(s):** Gaynor Murphy, Anna Lloyd Williams and Louise Usher

**Brief Description:**

- Improve provision for Literacy across the school based on the EEF's key recommendations
- Improve skills of workforce
- Utilise QA support in order to identify areas of best practice
- Upskill support staff to ensure effective implementation of literacy intervention programmes





# ACCELERATING LEARNING

## Developing mathematical and numeracy skills in the outdoor provision

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- **Focus:** sharing ideas on how to develop pupils' mathematical and numeracy skills outdoors through a range of rich learning experiences (many of the activities linked to the topic of 'Christmas' and the use of natural resources and loose parts). Sharing ideas how to develop maths and numeracy skills which can be adapted to your current situation
- Activities to support overall development of personal and social skills and their well-being
- Suitable for Nursery – Year 2 teachers and TAs

Following the live webinar, a recording will be available within the 'Webinars' section on GwE Support Centre.

## Foundation Phase Accelerated Learning Model and examples of activities that exemplify the model

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- Guidance on each section of the Accelerated Learning Model in Foundation Phase
  - Examples of activities, exemplifying the different sections of the model for Nursery/Reception and Year 1 and 2
- Recording available within the 'Webinars' section of GwE Support Centre.



# ACCELERATING LEARNING

## Precision Teaching and SAFMEDS – Primary and Secondary Numeracy Webinar

**Provider Name(s):** Kaydee Owen (Bangor University), Manon Davies (Primary), Sian Caldwell (Secondary)

### **Brief Description:**

- Evidence based numeracy strategy to support learners develop fluency in specific mathematical skills
- Introduction to new Precision Teaching and SAFMEDS resources, its online application and the comprehensive support package to help families apply the Precision Teaching and SAFMEDS strategy at home
- Online access to full SAFMEDS training for any schools/members of staff that have not previously attended SAFMEDS training. Members of staff who have attended training before can also use this training as a refresher
- Practical guidance and support implementation available from dedicated Bangor University staff via email and phone

<https://sites.google.com/hwbcymru.net/gwewebinars/primary>

## Accelerating Learning Programme – Primary Literacy & Numeracy Webinar

**Provider Name(s):** Manon Davies, Vicky Lees, Joanne Davies, Anna Hughes and Gwawr Thomas

### **Brief Description:**

- Examples of Literacy and Numeracy learning sequences and review of evidence based teaching packages
- Effective planning frameworks for discrete teaching of specific literacy and numeracy skills, flexible for use at home, school or as blended models; exemplifying cross-curricular responsibilities, use of outdoors to support learning and well-being, DCF and other innovations in provision through holistic learning experiences
- Comprehensive review of teaching strategies and online programmes in literacy and numeracy to provide educators with information to make informed, evidence-based decisions to achieve the best impact on pupil outcomes

<https://sites.google.com/hwbcymru.net/gwewebinars/primary>



# ACCELERATING LEARNING

## 'Headsprout' reading programme- overview and supporting information webinar

**Provider Name(s):** Vicky Lees / Sarah Roberts (Bangor University)

**Brief Description:**

- Introduction to the reading programme, its online application and the comprehensive support package to help families apply the Headsprout strategy at home
- Programmes comprises of early reading, reading comprehension and advanced reading
- Practical information about implementation and home/school support available from dedicated Bangor university staff
- Implementation support via email and phone  
<https://sites.google.com/hwbcymru.net/gwewebinars/primary>

## 'Repeated reading and high frequency words' reading fluency programme webinar

**Provider Name(s):** Vicky Lees / Bangor University Researchers

**Brief Description:**

- Introduction to the free reading support programme
- **Repeated Reading** is a reading intervention which supports pupils to develop oral reading fluency of passages of text
- **High Frequency Words fluency** intervention is a specific approach to improving the fluency of reading
- Ongoing training, guidance and support information

## 'Remote Instruction in Language and Literacy' (RILL) Reading and Spelling Programme Webinar

**Provider Name(s):** Vicky Lees / Bangor University Researchers

**Brief Description:**

- Introduction to the free 8 week evidence based reading and spelling programme, supporting learners to develop phonology, vocabulary, word reading and spelling, through live (synchronous) and remote (asynchronous) instruction
- Includes a comprehensive support package to help families access the programme at home
- Access to full RILL training for staff and families
- Ongoing implementation support via email and phone



# ACCELERATING LEARNING

## Accelerate Literacy for all Classroom Teachers and Teaching Assistants

(once per term)

**Provider Name(s):** Gaynor Murphy, Anna Lloyd Williams and Louise Usher

### **Brief Description:**

- Improve provision for Literacy across the school based on the EEF's key recommendations
- Improve skills of workforce
- Utilise QA support in order to identify areas of best practice
- Upskill support staff to ensure effective implementation of literacy intervention programmes

## “Your Voice” (GwE) Oracy Plan – Voice21

**Provider Name(s):** GwE Welsh Language Team

### **Brief Description:**

- Oracy promotional scheme in KS3 as well as transition to KS2
- This scheme is based on the principles of teaching Voice21 (School21)
- Support the ‘Accelerated Learning’ by focusing on oracy within that plan
- Build and develop on schemes that have already been successful e.g. ‘Ilafaredd@gwe’ and the ‘Gwefeillio’ plan

## Support children to use Welsh as a second language

**Provider Name(s):** GwE Welsh Language Team

### **Brief Description:**

- Resources on Hwb to support parents of children who attend a Welsh-medium school or are learning Welsh in an English-medium or bilingual school
- Information and help in the form of software for checking Welsh spelling and grammar
- Distance learning resources for all ages also available in one place
- A video clip by Enlli Thomas suitable for parents on “Supporting children to use Welsh”





# DIGITAL



## Google for Education

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- On-line courses split into three tiers - 1. Google Core Apps 2. Google Classroom (Foundation) 3. Google Classroom (Intermediate)
- Each course is approximately 45 minutes and includes a series of videos, practical tasks and an assessment at the end
- Suitable for teachers who are keen to develop their skills through their own initiative, or for schools to use in staff training sessions, twilight sessions or INSET days.
- Suitable for all sectors
- Located on the digital learning page in the support centre

## Adobe Spark

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- On-line courses introducing elements of Adobe Spark – Spark Post / Spark Video / Spark Page
- Each element can be completed individually (approximately 15 minutes each), or the course may be completed in full. It includes practical tasks and a final assessment (approximately 70-80 minutes)
- Suitable for teachers who are keen to develop their skills through their own initiative, or for schools to use in staff training sessions, twilight sessions or INSET days
- Suitable for all sectors
- Located on the digital learning page in the support centre

## Flipgrid

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- On-line courses split into two tiers - 1. Flipgrid - Foundation 2. Flipgrid - Intermediate
- Each course is approximately 45 minutes and includes a series of videos, practical tasks and an assessment at the end
- Suitable for teachers who are keen to develop their skills through their own initiative, or for schools to use in staff training sessions, twilight sessions or INSET days
- Suitable for all sectors
- Located on the digital learning page in the support centre



## j2e

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- On-line courses introducing elements of j2e - Creating Classrooms / Groups + j2homework / j2e5 + j2whiteboard + j2blast / jit5 + j2whiteboard + j2blast / j2data
- Each course is approximately 45 minutes and includes a series of videos, practical tasks and an assessment at the end
- Suitable for teachers who are keen to develop their skills through their own initiative, or for schools to use in staff training sessions, twilight sessions or INSET days
- Suitable for primary schools
- Located on the digital learning page in the support centre

## 360 Safe Cymru - live / on demand Webinar

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- An introduction to digital safety self-evaluation software, 360 Safe Cymru
- Looking at the benefits of using the software
- Provide an overview of the templates and policies available
- A live webinar to provide opportunities to ask questions, but it will also be available on demand - suitable for all sectors

## 360 Safe Cymru - sessions for clusters or alliances

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- Practical training on how to use the digital safety self-evaluation tool
- An opportunity for cluster schools to become familiar with the system and its content
- An opportunity for cluster schools to collaborate on identifying priorities and planning for improvement
- Suitable for all sectors



## 360 Digi Cymru

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- A webinar to launch and raise awareness of the new digital safety self-evaluation tool - 360 Digi Cymru
- An opportunity to see the system in action and to discuss the main benefits of using it
- An opportunity to see how the school can use the tool to identify strengths and weaknesses, plan for improvement and develop specific aspects of provision to raise standards in digital learning
- Suitable for all sectors

## 360 Digi Cymru - sessions for clusters or alliances

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- Practical training on how to use the new self-evaluation tool - 360 Digi Cymru
- An opportunity to become familiar with the system and its content
- An opportunity for cluster schools to collaborate on identifying priorities and planning for improvement
- Suitable for all sectors

## Digital Resilience

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- A series of events to raise awareness of online safety and digital resilience
- Discuss strategic leadership in this area, teaching and learning and steps that teachers and learners can take to safeguard themselves
- Suitable for all sectors

## Effective use of apps

**Provider Name(s):** Gwion Clarke and Hywel Roberts

**Brief Description:**

- On-line courses introducing possible examples of using apps effectively
- Each course is approximately 45 minutes and includes a series of videos and examples
- Suitable for teachers who are keen to develop their skills through their own initiative, or for schools to use in staff training sessions - material is available on demand
- Suitable for primary schools



## Digital Skills across the Curriculum for NQTs

**Provider Name(s):** Ieuan Jones

**Brief Description:**

- Ensure that learners have relevant high-level digital skills to excel in new jobs of the future
- Use the relevant technologies and skills to transform the digital competence of our learners
- Take advantage of opportunities to improve the standard of pedagogy, while aiming to become better teachers
- Make wide use of Hwb (the learning platform for Wales) to promote learning and teaching across the curriculum

## Effective use of digital tools to support the learning either at school or through distance or blended learning

**Provider Name(s):** Foundation Phase Team

**Brief Description:**

- Use of adobe spark video/post to introduce and present activities
- Effective use of 'See-saw' both at home and at school
- Good practise case studies

Cluster sessions to be arranged on request through the School Improvement Adviser

## Developing digital language and creative thinking through blended learning and teaching

**Provider Name(s):** GwE Welsh Language Team

**Brief Description:**

- Fit into the 'Accelerated Learning' scheme
- Linguistically equip our learners to develop digital creative skills and thinking
- Build confidence and up-skill teachers to experiment on digital platforms
- Training and workshops leading to the sharing of good practice





0300 500 8087



[www.gwenorth.wales](http://www.gwenorth.wales)



[post@gwenorth.wales](mailto:post@gwenorth.wales)

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# **Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19**

Update report from June to November 2020

January 2021



**The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:**

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- ▲ primary schools
- ▲ secondary schools
- ▲ special schools
- ▲ pupil referral units
- ▲ all-age schools
- ▲ independent schools
- ▲ further education
- ▲ independent specialist colleges
- ▲ adult community learning
- ▲ local authority education services for children and young people
- ▲ teacher education and training
- ▲ Welsh for adults
- ▲ work-based learning
- ▲ learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- ▲ reports to Senedd Cymru and provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the Welsh Government and others
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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## Introduction

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This report is written in response to a request for advice from the Minister for Education in July 2020. It provides an overview of how local authorities and regional consortia have worked with schools and pupils referral units (PRUs) to promote learning and support vulnerable pupils during the COVID-19 period between June and November 2020, that is the period after the initial lockdown when schools were reopening. It captures the ways local authorities and regional consortia have adapted their work to respond to the challenges resulting from COVID-19. The work was carried out before all schools returned to remote learning in January 2021 but will be helpful to inform current ways of working.

The intended audience for this report is the Welsh Government, local authority and regional consortia officers and staff in schools and PRUs. It draws on the evidence base in appendix 1 including interviews, survey feedback and documentary evidence. Due to restrictions associated with COVID-19 we were unable to visit schools and PRUs to gather first hand evidence about the quality of provision. The quantitative feedback from the surveys issued can be found in appendix 2. We have also provided detailed feedback to individual local authorities and regional consortia to support their own self-evaluation for improvement. The report is part of a series of publications by Estyn to share learning and support the education system's continued response and recovery (Appendix 3).

The report features 'cameos' from local authorities and regional consortia. These are not case studies as we are unable to evaluate the impact of the work because of restrictions on our activities due to COVID-19. The cameos are included to exemplify points raised in the report, giving a flavour of the work that has taken place across Wales.

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## Background

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In the foreword to his Annual Report 2019-2020, Meilyr Rowlands HMCI (Estyn, 2020, p.4) stated that 'the last months of the 2019-2020 academic year brought challenges to Welsh education the like of which we have not seen in generations. The challenges were many, complex and unexpected. The COVID-19 pandemic changed people's lives, had a huge impact on economies, and caused major disruption to education systems worldwide and in Wales'. His foreword offers an initial account of how schools and other education and training providers coped with the initial lockdown period and strived to support pupils while providing continuity of learning for them remotely. For further information on this initial lockdown period see the [Annual Report 2019-2020](#).

This thematic report focuses on the period from late summer to late autumn. A timeline of significant events during this period can be found in appendix 4.

In late June, nearly all schools reopened to pupils to provide an opportunity for them to 'Check in, catch up and prepare for summer, and September'. In July and August, the Welsh Government published guidance to support schools to reopen to all pupils, on supporting learning and on supporting vulnerable learners (Welsh Government 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Schools and PRUs reopened to pupils in September, with a transition period leading up to all pupils attending by 14 September 2020. Almost immediately, schools began to experience their first positive COVID-19 cases among pupils and staff, reflecting the situation in their communities, and the first of a series of local restrictions to reduce transmission was announced. During September and October, individual pupils, classes or whole year groups were required at times to self-isolate, leading to the need for remote learning provision. The length of self-isolation periods varied from one day to 14 days depending on the reason and personal circumstances<sup>1</sup>. Positive COVID-19 cases continued to rise and the Welsh Government announced a two-week firebreak lockdown from 23 October 2020. Schools and PRUs were closed for half-term during the first week of the firebreak. During the second week primary schools re-opened for face-to-face learning while many secondary-aged pupils reverted to distance learning from home.

In early November, around 90% of pupils were in school. The proportion of pupils in school fell to around 80% by the end of November and to around 70% by mid-December, as increasing numbers of pupils were required to self-isolate or their school was closed due to an insufficient number of staff available to supervise pupils on site. Towards the end of the autumn term, an increasing number of parents chose not to send their children to school, even if their school remained open, often due to concerns about being able to meet family or friends at Christmas. The national attendance figures mask considerable variation across schools and local authority areas, as in the local authorities worst affected by COVID-19 only around 50% of pupils were in school towards the end of the term. The national figures also mask considerable variation across age groups, with older secondary school age pupils having the lowest attendance at school.

The scope of this thematic report includes the extent of the support provided to schools and PRUs by local authorities and regional consortia during this period. Although the scope does not include post-16 or pre-school providers, we refer to aspects of these sectors' work where helpful. The report focused specifically on two aspects:

- Promoting learning – the quality of the learning offer and how has this been supported through further guidance and professional learning?
- Supporting vulnerable pupils – how did the local authority targeted services and support to vulnerable pupils to support them to engage in learning? What barriers still exist?

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<sup>1</sup> The maximum self-isolation period was reduced to 10 days from 10 December 2020.

We also considered the early planning and implementation for the 'Recruit, recover and raise standards programme' grant across schools and PRUs and the next steps for this work.

At the time of our engagement with schools in October, very few pupils needed to receive blended learning. Most pupils were able to attend school and benefit from face-to-face teaching. Where pupils were required to isolate or shield, schools provided distance learning until they were able to return. A blended learning approach would involve a cohesive, intentional plan for pupils' learning to involve a combination of learning in school and at home which was not required in most schools during the autumn term. At the time of publication in January 2021, all schools have returned to providing remote learning for pupils, with some face-to-face provision in school for vulnerable pupils and those with parents who are key workers.



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## Main findings

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- 1 Local authorities and regional consortia have worked closely together and with the Welsh Government to respond to the evolving context caused by the pandemic. Through the Association and Directors of Education Wales (ADEW), senior leaders have provided good support for each other and collaborated to create shared approaches and resources.
- 2 Local authorities provided valuable support to enable their schools and PRUs to reopen successfully to all pupils in September. Particular strengths were the practical support around health and safety and on communicating with parents and learners. For example, local authorities, working with health care partners where appropriate, supported risk assessments, including for vulnerable pupils and developed welcome packs providing information for parents, carers and pupils. School leaders welcomed the direction from local authorities and regional consortia to focus on pupil wellbeing and felt this was appropriate.
- 3 During the initial lockdown and the autumn term, local authority services had to respond rapidly to support the wellbeing of all pupils, and particularly those known to be vulnerable. Where local authorities already had effective joint working across services and external agencies, this was evident in the efficiency with which they responded to these needs. In other local authorities where collaboration is less well established, the pandemic has been a catalyst to strengthen joint working. The enhanced use of digital communication also contributed to more efficient multi-agency working within local authorities.
- 4 During the initial lockdown, teachers had to respond quickly to the need to provide distance learning materials for pupils. This provision improved though the summer term. As the need for a number of pupils to learn away from the classroom continued in the autumn term, it remained a priority to further improve and embed distance and blended learning provision. Regional consortia and local authorities have developed helpful guidance, playlists of videos featuring good practice and a range of professional learning. However, schools', local authorities' and regional consortia's oversight of the quality of provision is underdeveloped.
- 5 Pupils' learning experiences in the autumn term varied widely across and within schools. This is partly due to the varied impact of the pandemic in different areas and also as a result of the different policies and practices adopted by local authorities in relation to close contacts and the different ways that schools have organised groups and cohorts of pupils. These factors have resulted in considerably unequal learning experiences for pupils who have received most of their autumn term education in school and those who have been taught at a distance for extended periods.
- 6 In his recent Annual Report, the Chief Inspector's noted that 'despite considerable effort by schools, local authorities and central government to provide additional equipment and support, a minority of learners were disadvantaged by lack of access

to suitable computers or adequate connectivity.’ The barriers to learning at home identified in the summer term, including access to digital technology, remained in the autumn term.

- 7 The pandemic has had a greater impact on certain groups of pupils and magnified challenges that already existed. For example, school leaders have told us that pupils eligible for free school meals made slower progress in their learning during the initial lockdown than their peers, with some pupils returning to school with weaker language and numeracy skills than before the initial lockdown started.
- 8 The pandemic has exacerbated some challenges that local authority and regional consortia had already been working with schools to address. Pupils across Wales have experienced the pandemic in very different ways as a result of their home circumstances. The necessity for pupils to work at home for periods of time in the autumn term has highlighted the need for pupils to be able to work independently successfully and for schools to focus on supporting pupils to improve learning resilience.
- 9 Local authorities and consortia have recognised the potential longer-term impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of children and young people. All have offered enhanced professional learning for staff from schools and PRUs on supporting wellbeing, including on bereavement and adverse childhood experiences. Children and young people already challenged because of adverse childhood experiences prior to the pandemic have faced further challenges. Children and young people in stable family environments with very few or no prior adverse childhood experiences may also have been affected by the pandemic. For example, time away from friends caused by lockdowns, isolation periods or having to remain in tight bubbles at school can have an adverse impact on pupils’ social development and their mental health.
- 10 In most cases, local authorities have ensured that statutory processes for pupils in relation to special education needs (SEN), including assessments and annual reviews, have continued during the autumn term. Where there have been delays, this has most commonly been due to the capacity of educational psychology services and other specialist services, caused by staff absence or challenges in delivering services remotely.
- 11 Regional consortium and local authority officers continued to support teachers’ and school leaders’ digital competence during the autumn term. The increased effective use of digital communication has had positive consequences for facilitating more agile, efficient and frequent interactions between and within learning communities across Wales. School and PRU leaders have valued the flexibility of online professional learning opportunities provided by local authorities and regional consortia.
- 12 School leaders across Wales have mixed views about the effectiveness of support they have received from their local authority and their regional school improvement consortium during the pandemic. School leaders in south west Wales are most satisfied with the support they have received from their local authority, while school leaders in north Wales are most satisfied with the support they have received from their regional consortium.

- 13 Local authorities made appropriate early adaptations to the governance arrangements but a few local authorities were too slow in resuming their scrutiny functions. By the middle of July 2020, most councils had begun to hold Cabinet meetings online, but only half of councils had held virtual meetings of their scrutiny committees. As a result, decisions about re-opening schools and providing support for learners in the summer were not scrutinised in half of councils. By the autumn, all council Cabinets were meeting online, and scrutiny committees in most councils were also meeting online.

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## Recommendations

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### **Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:**

- R1 Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity
- R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs
- R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals
- R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils
- R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design

## Leadership

### Decision-making and governance

- 14 Local authorities and regional consortia have worked closely together and with the Welsh Government to respond to the evolving context caused by the pandemic. Through ADEW – the Association of Directors of Education in Wales – directors of education have worked co-operatively to support each other through the pandemic. Directors have reduced the burden on themselves, their officers and staff in the regional consortia by identifying aspects of work that they can agree to work on collaboratively or on behalf of each other. ADEW has supported national work with Welsh Government such as guidance relating to the continuity of learning.
- 15 Audit Wales has published several reports on how councils' governance arrangements have been affected by the pandemic. Early during the initial lockdown period, councils had to use emergency governance arrangements, meaning that typically 'responsibility for decisions about how councils use public money and provide services fell to senior council officers in consultation with a much smaller number of senior councillors than would usually be involved in decision-making – sometimes just the leader of the council.' (Audit Wales, 2020).
- 16 Some councils were slow to use new regulations that came in to force in April 2020 that made it easier for councils to meet virtually. As Audit Wales noted, 'in some of those councils there is no comprehensive record available online of the decisions taken since lockdown. This makes it difficult for the public to see and understand the decisions their council has taken during lockdown, and who is accountable for them' (Audit Wales, 2020).
- 17 By the middle of July 2020, most councils had begun to hold Cabinet meetings online, but only half of councils had held virtual meetings of their scrutiny committees. As a result, decisions about reopening schools to all pupils and providing support for learners in the summer were not scrutinised in half of councils. By the autumn, all council Cabinets were meeting online, and scrutiny committees in most councils were also meeting online.
- 18 When important decisions are being taken about education services, local authorities should usually take account of the views of school leaders as well as other stakeholders where relevant. Our survey of school leaders across Wales carried out in October 2020 found that the majority of them agree that their local authority involves them effectively in discussions about local education services. However, a few school leaders do not feel involved enough. Local authorities have continued to build on the range of fora they have with school and PRU leaders to communicate, consult and in a few cases, co-construct approaches.

### Working together to support schools and PRUs

- 19 School and PRU leaders in south-west Wales were considerably more positive about the work of their local authority than leaders were about their local authority in the

other three regions. For example, they were more positive about the timeliness of advice and guidance from the local authority, how well their local authority communicated with them, and the support provided to enable their school or PRU to re-open successfully to all pupils in September 2020. They were also more positive about how well their local authority involves them in discussions about education services. South-west Wales is the only region where challenge advisers are directly employed by local authorities, rather than by regional consortia, and this may partly explain why leaders are more positive in this region.

- 20 School leaders' views of the support they receive from their regional consortium varies considerably. A majority of leaders agreed that GwE had provided effective support and guidance to support learning in their school or PRU. Nearly half of leaders agreed with this was the case with EAS, but only a minority agreed this was the case with CSC and ERW. A majority of leaders also agreed that GwE had provided useful information on the differences between, and approaches to, distance and blended learning. Just over half of leaders agreed with this was the case with CSC and EAS, but only a minority agreed this was the case with ERW.
- 21 Just over half of school leaders told us that they feel that their local authority cares about their wellbeing. This indicates that there is room for improvement in the relationship between some local authorities and their school leaders. A majority of teachers and most support staff told us that their school cares well for staff wellbeing.
- 22 During the initial lockdown, local authority services had to respond rapidly to support the wellbeing of all learners, and particularly those known to be vulnerable. Where local authorities already had effective joint working across services and external agencies, this was evident in the efficiency with which they responded to needs. For example, in Bridgend, the 'early help locality service model' already meant that multi-disciplinary teams worked out of three bases in the county, working in an integrated way to support families with vulnerable children and young people. These teams were well placed to work collaboratively and provide support through the pandemic. In other authorities where collaboration is less well established, the pandemic has been a catalyst to strengthen joint working. For example, Gwynedd's education psychology service has collaborated with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to develop a new approach to supporting pupils who are absent from school because of their emotional wellbeing.
- 23 Local authorities have sought to support school leaders in preparing for various scenarios in the face of uncertainty about how the pandemic may affect schools through the autumn and into 2021. A majority of school and PRU leaders told us in our survey that their local authority provides effective guidance to support them to develop flexible plans in the event of further spikes in infections.

**Cameo: School Business Resilience Planning**

Prior to the increased operation of schools, the Corporate Director for Education and Family Support in Bridgend required all schools including the PRU to produce a business resilience plan. The local authority provided a plan template. Settings were asked to consider a range of possible scenarios and the actions they would take to ensure the continuity of learning. The local authority quality assured the plans and, where necessary required further clarification. Possible scenarios included; the self-isolation of pupils, either individually or as whole year groups; the self-isolation of staff; planning to ensure continuity of leadership. Possible solutions may include the strategic planning and mapping of blended learning; developing the capability and capacity of staff and pupils in using online platforms to support blended learning; producing pre-prepared emergency learning packs for all groups of pupils; use of Welsh Government's 'Recruit, recover and raise standards programme' grant and cover arrangements.

**Delivering ongoing priorities**

- 24 Local authorities have tried sustain as much 'business as usual' as possible while dealing with the various added needs of schools and PRUs associated with the pandemic. For example, wherever possible, work has continued to reorganise schools and improve school facilities as part of the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme. The workload associated with responding to the pandemic has undoubtedly slowed progress in some areas. For example, at the end of March 2020, Neath Port Talbot left the regional school improvement consortium, ERW, and three of the remaining five authorities gave notice of their intention to leave at the end of March 2021. The lack of a clear plan for school improvement services in south west Wales from April 2021 is a significant concern. Elected members and senior officers across all local authorities in the region have been slow to ensure that there is a clear vision and plan for how high quality school improvement services that meet their needs will be provided to schools and PRUs from April 2021.
- 25 Planning and professional learning activities focused on preparing for Curriculum for Wales that schools, local authorities and regional consortia had planned for this year have inevitably been disrupted by the pandemic. From September, we had originally planned to begin discussions with all schools in Wales about their early preparatory work to implement Curriculum for Wales from September 2022. Instead, our discussions with schools in the autumn mainly concentrated on how they are responding to the pandemic. Despite the disruption to preparatory work for Curriculum for Wales, our Chief Inspector noted in our latest annual report that the pandemic 'has presented providers with the need and the opportunity to evolve and innovate ... The re-thinking that the lockdown required of schools, combined with deeper engagement with families and support services, has arguably put schools in a better place to co-create with these stakeholders a common vision for realising the Curriculum for Wales' (Estyn, 2020, p.9).

## Promoting learning

### Supporting schools and PRUs to reopen to all pupils

- 26 Prior to September, many pupils had spent only a few days in school since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, with some not having spent any time in school. In July, Welsh Government (2020c) issued guidance to schools and settings to support the full return to school in September. This set out priorities for learning emphasising the health and wellbeing of pupils and the importance of outdoor learning. Officers from local authorities ensured that they adopted the same priorities in their work with schools at the start of the autumn term. Local authority officers recognised the pressure that school leaders were under as they planned the reopening of schools and the amount of their time that they needed to give to operational matters including keeping staff and pupils safe. In order to support headteachers, most local authorities and regional consortia distilled the guidance about learning and brought relevant information together in one place, as in Carmarthenshire where officers established Y Porth website for this purpose. Many of the headteachers who responded to our survey said that they had sufficient support from their local authority to help them to re-open their school or PRU successfully. Many agreed that their local authority had provided guidance in good time. This contrasts with what school leaders told us about the guidance in the spring and summer terms, when many felt that it was received too late and that they had to put processes in place to support pupils' learning prior to receiving guidance.

#### **Cameo: Supporting pupils' return to school**

GwE developed a regional model in line with Welsh Government guidance, with local authorities and schools, to ensure that the individual needs of pupils were met, with consideration to their local context. The model evaluated the school's preparedness and approach to ensure learning for all pupils continued. It focused on three inter-related components that assess pupils' fitness for learning. These include their emotional and mental wellbeing; their health and physical fitness; and their core skills of numeracy, literacy, independence, and readiness for new learning.

The aim of the model was to support schools to assist pupils to return to 'learning fitness' and to promote learning which allows pupils to continue to make progress. Ensuring coherence for pupils between in-school and remote learning is another key element of the model including developing appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements were temporarily disapplied.

- 27 Through the school summer break and into the autumn term, regional consortia and local authorities built on the work during the initial lockdown to provide support and guidance to schools for ensuring the continuity of pupils' learning. In some instances, resources provided earlier in the pandemic were revised and updated to make it easier for school leaders and teachers to engage with them. For example, in

the EAS, officers listened carefully to the views of headteachers about the playlist of videos showing effective practice that officers had begun to compile at the start of the pandemic. In the summer term, schools had found the playlist useful as it drew together the national and local guidance about distance learning in one place. As the volume of materials increased, school staff found it more difficult and time-consuming to use the resource and officers responded well to this by streamlining the content into an easier to use web-based resource.

#### **Cameo: 'Supporting Our Schools' website**

In response to feedback from stakeholders, the EAS have created a new website to house their support for schools resources. The new website is easier to navigate than the playlist that the service used previously. Resources are clearly labelled and easy to scan. The website contains sections covering different topics such as governance, school improvement, guidance on using the accelerating learning grant funding and curriculum support. The website also contains a link to another new website that houses all resources related to distance and blended learning. These resources are also clearly organised under themes and there are several examples of informative case studies and presentations from schools, as well as links to helpful external resources. In order to make it easy for leaders to identify any new resources, these are signposted each week in a separate section, before being moved to the relevant themed section. The EAS staff are providing online introductory sessions to the new websites. These well-attended, informative sessions are sector specific and available through both English and Welsh. In addition to providing a demonstration of the websites, these sessions also include a choice of breakout sessions involving presentations from schools and an opportunity for discussions in small groups.

### **Identifying and addressing regression in learning**

- 28 Early in the autumn term, schools leaders started to plan how they could best use the funding from the Welsh Government for the 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards' programme. The Welsh Government (2020e) issued guidance for schools to support the use of the grant using the work of national and international organisations including the Children's Commissioner and the OECD to identify the impact of the pandemic on pupils' progress in learning. The government acknowledged that, while many pupils had not progressed as much as they could, there were groups of pupils for whom the impact of the pandemic was greater. These included pupils in year groups preparing for examinations, pupils who had made the transition from primary to secondary school and vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. Local authorities and regions supported schools to plan for the use of the grant. For example, in GwE, officers worked with schools to try to ensure that headteachers used the funding in a sustainable way and aligned its use to local priorities, including the Welsh language strategy, to benefit pupils in the longer term. Across Wales, many schools found it difficult to recruit staff using the grant because they were drawing on a limited number of available people. A few schools employed a teacher or teaching assistant on a shared basis and many schools used the funding to increase the hours of existing staff. In smaller schools, funding was often not sufficient to be able to support recruitment. Although, it is too early for schools and local authorities to



monitor the impact of the grant on addressing pupils' skills deficits, officers from local authorities and consortia have plans in place to do this. Officers in Powys local authority provided helpful advice for governors about how to evaluate schools' use of the funds on pupil progress.

- 29 The impact on pupils' learning and skills from the initial lockdown period differs widely across Wales. In their study into 'Schoolwork in Lockdown', researchers from UCL (Green, 2020) found that children across the United Kingdom spent an average of 2.5 hours each day engaging in learning. Their research shows that 20% of pupils engaged with learning for less than an hour each day and only 17% worked for more than four hours (Green, 2020, p.2). This means that between March and September 2020 nearly all pupils across the UK spent considerably less time than usual learning during the pandemic. In Wales, the number of pupils engaging with learning was lower than the averages for the UK as a whole. The study found that 20% of pupils in Wales were doing no schoolwork at home or less than an hour each day (Green, 2020, p.19). Only 15% of pupils were learning for four hours each day (Green, 2020, p.19). The report highlights substantial inequality linked to deprivation and social groups. Our findings from engagement calls to schools in the October 2020 mirror these findings. Headteachers from schools in areas of social deprivation say that teachers found it more difficult to engage pupils and families with learning through the summer term. We reported on the reasons for this, including access to technology for learning and support from parents in the thematic section of the Annual Report 2019-2020 (Estyn, 2020).

**Cameo: Assessing the level of learner engagement in the Vale of Glamorgan**

Prior to reopening to all pupils, officers from the local authority, in collaboration with the CSC and schools, developed a matrix to assess the level of engagement of pupils and their wellbeing. Through conversations held between improvement partners and headteachers, information was collected from 55 out of 56 schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. The useful report summarised the key findings, the barriers and challenges encountered by schools and effective practice across the region, and concluded by highlighting ways forward. The information gathered has been used to inform local policy and share effective practice across the local authority through a collection of case studies. In addition, support was provided to schools to help strengthen areas such as increasing the engagement of vulnerable pupils.

- 30 As pupils returned to school in September 2020, leaders and teachers put in place processes to identify the impact of the school closure period on pupils' learning and skills. Many schools used the national online personal assessments for reading and numeracy with pupils in Years 2 to 9 to supplement teachers' own assessments of pupils' skills. Identifying pupils' skill levels following the school closure period was a particular challenge for secondary schools as pupils moved from Year 6 to Year 7. To help schools to identify a baseline for these pupils in secondary schools across the south-east region, the EAS provided schools with funding to support pupil assessment. Generally, local authorities report that pupils have fallen behind with reading and writing skills, and headteachers reported in early October that there has also been a negative impact on the speaking and social skills of younger pupils in the

foundation phase. Local authority and consortia officers are working with schools to address these skills deficits, and are mindful of the need to ensure that schools do not focus on these core skills to the detriment of the wider curriculum.

### Supporting Welsh language skills

- 31 An issue identified during the summer term was the learning of pupils in Welsh-medium schools from English-speaking homes, as many of these pupils had not had the opportunity to hear or practise the language. Addressing this issue was one of the aims of the Welsh Government's 'Recruit, recover and raise standards programme'. As the pupils affected by this issue returned to school in September, staff were particularly concerned about the levels of pupils' speaking skills. Local authorities put a number of initiatives in place to support schools and pupils. For example in Neath Port Talbot, the Welsh advisory service developed useful resources and collaborated with Menter Iaith and the Urdd to provide support for schools. In Wrexham, officers ensured that pupils from Welsh-medium schools who have needed to self-isolate since September have received resource packs and weekly face-to-face sessions or online sessions including podcasts. Several local authorities, including Conwy and Bridgend, used their immersion facilities to provide additional support for these pupils and Cardiff increased its provision in this area to help cope with demand. Officers in the regional consortia also provided support for schools. The EAS placed members of its Welsh support team in Welsh-medium primary schools across the region during the autumn term to support staff and pupils to address the deficit in pupils' skills. In our discussions with headteachers from English-medium primary schools, many said that they valued the support for teaching Welsh from local authorities and regional consortia, in particular the resources produced by Welsh advisory team staff to support provision in school.

#### **Cameo: Supporting pupils who are new to the Welsh language**

One example of the close alignment of the work of Gwynedd and GwE is their approach to supporting schools to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. The challenge of catering for their linguistic needs when schools reopened for all pupils in September was compounded by the difficulties in running Welsh language units in their traditional form. To support primary schools, the local authority arranged for the specialist teachers to provide an outreach service on a cluster basis, while the cluster's improvement support officer worked with the schools to create and adapt Welsh schemes of work.

- 32 Around 1,000 parents responded to our survey question about support for pupils in Welsh-medium schools. Many of these said that they were happy with the support provided by the school to help their children make progress with their Welsh. Very few parents felt that this was not the case, but those that did said that there was a lack of support for parents who do not speak Welsh and a lack of bilingual resources to enable parents to provide support for their children at home. Most of the pupils who responded to our survey agreed that they are getting good support to help them with their Welsh language skills.

**Cameo: Supporting pupils' Welsh language development**

In Carmarthenshire, officers identified the need to support pupils to maintain their engagement with the Welsh language from early in the pandemic. The Welsh advisory team adapted and refined their existing resources to provide schools and PRUs with activities to share with pupils and parents. In addition, they created extra-curricular activities and micro-lessons for pupils to recall previous learning, revise grammar, and to develop their reading skills and numeracy skills. They provided worthwhile tasks based on Welsh poetry as a stimulus to learning as well as providing activities to develop pupils' Welsh-speaking skills through the 'Cynllun Clonc' and Flipgrid activities.

Social media was used well to promote Welsh language activities, for example scientific activities for the outdoors and activities on history of the local area. Homework booklets were also distributed to enable parents to support their children with work through the medium of Welsh. Local authority officers and teachers in a number of its secondary schools worked with regional consortia staff to create a wide range of valuable Welsh language resources to support pupils in Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. Officers continued to develop resources for schools throughout the autumn term to support schools to improve pupils' Welsh language development.

**Promoting broad curriculum experiences**

- 33 Through Modification of Curriculum Requirements in Wales Notices, the Welsh Government temporarily modified the requirement for schools and funded non-maintained nurseries to provide the basic curriculum and associated assessment arrangements. In practice the curriculum narrowed in many schools in the autumn term. Whether the result of their own risk assessments or a misunderstanding of Welsh Government operational guidance, lots of schools determined the need to sanitise resources between uses. In schools where this was the case, it has had an impact on the youngest and the oldest pupils in schools in particular. For example, in the foundation phase pupils have had to access a limited range of resources in their continuous and enhanced provision. In secondary schools, pupils' access to equipment in practical subjects such as art and science has also become more difficult for teachers to manage.

**Cameo: Supporting science teaching**

ERW subject teams shared clear and helpful guidance which reassured and supported science teachers in the region. For example, the ERW science team gave examples of online sites that included video demonstrations of experiments, and useful and engaging resources that teachers could use for distance learning.

- 34 In a few local authorities, the delivery of shared services to schools, for example peripatetic music tuition for pupils stopped. In other local authorities, including Caerphilly and Cardiff, officers found new ways of providing these services. In Ceredigion, the authority's information technology team provided support to the

music service to enable them to teach virtually. This has enabled pupils to continue to receive instrumental lessons. This way of working has removed tutors' travel time and contributed to maintaining pupils' standards.

#### **Cameo: Caerphilly music service**

Local authority officers have worked to ensure that the schools' music service was able to resume its work more fully from September 2020. The local authority has provided clear guidance to music service staff and schools on how this service can be delivered safely in schools. It has also provided detailed guidance and protocols on how the service can be delivered remotely. The guidance covers a range of issues and scenarios, including lessons for individuals and classes, live and recorded sessions and safeguarding considerations. The guidance also provides clear information as to how the Welsh Government's guidance should be followed in the context of the Caerphilly music service.

- 35 In November 2020, the Minister for Education confirmed that, for qualifications in 2021, there will be no end of year examinations for pupils taking GCSE, AS level or A levels. The Minister established a Design and Delivery Group to advise on the process of awarding qualifications without examinations. Plans for this process were again being reviewed as term started in January 2021 with all pupils learning from home due to another national lockdown. Although it is understandable and necessary that plans for awarding qualifications have had to change again this year, these changes, especially in-year changes, can cause great stress and anxiety for pupils, as well as teachers.
- 36 Pupils in key stage 4 following alternative curriculum courses are a particular concern to many schools. There is a great deal of variation in how easily these pupils can access their alternative and off-site provision and this has proved to be a considerable timetabling challenge for schools. A large number of more practical courses such as hair and beauty have not been able to run. As a result, a few pupils who usually access provision of this kind, particularly those who were previously at risk of exclusion, are displaying challenging behaviour or are disengaging. Even when these courses are accessible, often it is with a reduced timetable because the provider cannot allow pupils from one school to mix with another. In Powys, officers engaged with all post-16 pupils through the Powys Learning Pathways website during the summer holidays. This helped pupils to feel supported and engaged after a period of disruption to their learning. At the same time, local authority officers made helpful bridging units available to pupils about to start post-16 courses. These units together with the contact have helped pupils transition to their post-16 studies. During the autumn, pupils had to remain at their own school for all learning as it was not possible to visit other campuses, even if their subject teachers were based elsewhere. Supported by officers in the local authority, subject teachers streamed lessons live so that all pupils could access them. As the local authority had already used remote learning through their 'e-sgol' programme, the transition to online learning was comparatively seamless and schools and pupils are familiar with how to make the best use of it.

- 37 Providers of post-16 education have developed contingency plans for local lockdowns or outbreaks of COVID-19 and continue to amend aspects of the delivery of teaching, training and assessment across the sectors. Where venues for pupils to receive face-to-face teaching or training have had to close, the restrictions on access to pupils' workplaces continue to be a major barrier to learning. Providers offer online activities to maintain learner engagement and interest, however a key challenge on vocational programmes and courses is maintaining the engagement and motivation of pupils during periods of lockdown or self-isolation. These pupils selected practical-based courses and with the current crisis this aspect is often paused or significantly reduced. Providers report that higher level pupils on higher level programmes, even those undertaking academic courses and programmes, may not make the progress that was initially expected due to family reasons such as childcare restricting their study time.

### Promoting more effective distance and blended learning

- 38 In her research commissioned by the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee, Dr Sofya Lyakhova of Swansea University (2020) found that, although many pupils fall behind in their academic learning without access to teachers and support from their parents, a small proportion may make gains in learning, particularly in reading. These are pupils who have the ability to self-regulate or as John Hattie (2020) says, 'they know what to do when they do not know and there is limited help available'. Lyakhova's research emphasises the need for pupils' emotional health and wellbeing to be strong in order for them to be able to learn independently. School improvement advisers have noted that building resilience and developing independent skills have become more evident as school priorities since pupils returned to school in the autumn. Local authority and regional consortia officers are aware of the need for a greater focus on teaching and learning strategies that accelerate the development of pupils' abilities in these areas.
- 39 The need for schools to act quickly to address the need for pupils to learn at home became more urgent as the autumn term progressed. It became clear in September 2020 that schools were going to be affected by positive COVID-19 cases and that pupils would be required to self-isolate at home for periods of time. In our survey, many governors said that their schools and PRUs had sound plans in place to ensure that teaching could continue if pupils were away from school because of another lockdown or the need to isolate. A majority of headteachers agreed, saying that local authorities had provided effective guidance to support schools and PRUs to develop flexible plans to deal with further outbreaks of COVID-19 infection. In practice, pupils' experiences as a result of these outbreaks have varied widely across Wales due to the varied impact of the pandemic in different areas and also the different policies and practices adopted by local authorities in relation to close contacts and the different ways that schools have organised groups and cohorts of pupils. This has resulted in further inequity in the learning experiences between pupils who have received their autumn term education in school and those who have been taught at a distance, in some cases for a significant proportion of the term. Where this happens, the barriers to learning at home identified in the summer term, including access to digital technology and parental support, remain. When we surveyed school leaders in October 2020, many headteachers felt that local authorities had been proactive in providing information technology resources and internet connectivity for those pupils

without access to these at home. Teachers and governors were less positive about this support. Around half of governors said that local authorities had provided effective support in this area. Although many teachers from primary schools and PRUs and a majority of those from special schools said that schools were helping pupils to overcome barriers to learning at home, only around half of the secondary school teachers and a minority of the teachers from all-age schools who responded to our survey agreed with this.

- 40 In November 2020, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales (2020) spoke to pupils from Years 9 to 13 to identify any differences in their learning experiences between the summer and autumn terms, in particular the period where all pupils in these year groups were working at home because of the national firebreak. The pupils involved in this work said that there had been improvements in their experiences of distance learning. Their days were structured in a similar way to a school timetable, and teachers had checked that all pupils had access to digital devices and were provided with feedback on their work online in a timely manner. In some schools, pupils had been asked to complete surveys about their learning experiences and, as a result, teachers had made adjustments to suit pupils. For example, some schools provided recordings of lessons that pupils could use at a time that suited them. The issues raised by pupils included the amount of work provided, which meant that they were working long hours, and the inconsistency of provision between different subject areas. They also shared concerns about the lack of support from parents who do not have the skills to support them and the lack of digital skills of some teachers. Many said that they missed interacting with teachers and other pupils and that, although the distance learning offer had improved, it still does not compare well with learning at school. The importance of remote peer interaction was one of the findings from the EEF’s Rapid Evidence Assessment (2020). Across the studies that EEF researchers reviewed, they found a range of strategies to support peer interaction, including peer marking and feedback, sharing models of good work, and opportunities for pupils to participate in live discussions of content. The evidence from pupils and schools indicates that this is an area of distance learning that needs development.
- 41 Across Wales, regional consortia and local authority officers have seen the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to focus on developing the ethos and principles of the Curriculum for Wales, for example the focus on health and wellbeing in schools at the start of the autumn term. In Powys, challenge advisers are promoting the use of the pedagogical principles to enrich pupils’ learning. In Flintshire, officers provided training on using the outdoor environment as a way to develop pupils’ resilience and perseverance in problem-solving. The training was provided for non-maintained settings, nursery and primary schools and PRUs with pupils of primary school age. Across the GwE region, officers recognise that many secondary schools have had to change their approach and plan lessons in thematic blocks due to pupils being in ‘bubbles’. Officers and elected members see this as a strength as it links clearly with the authority’s vision for implementing the Curriculum for Wales. Many secondary schools have made use of resources provided through GwE’s new online ‘support centre’, including multi-disciplinary units of work that fit well with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. Despite this positive work, there is also a recognition that the pandemic has slowed the progress that schools were making in addressing the implementation of the new curriculum.

## Professional learning

- 42 Regional consortia and local authorities increased the range of professional learning opportunities to address the additional need caused by the pandemic. Much of their work in the autumn term focused on supporting schools to understand and develop approaches to distance and blended learning, building on the work they started in the initial lockdown. As schools identified pupils' needs on their return to full-time schooling, officers in local authorities and regional consortia responded by tailoring their learning offer to support teachers to address pupils' specific needs. GwE offer a wide range of opportunities for schools to participate in specific professional learning opportunities to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and accelerated learning strategies. In Swansea, officers adjusted their learning offer as their understanding of the impact of distance learning on pupils developed. They worked with schools to provide the best fit model for individual circumstances. For example, the local authority supported teachers to design paper materials for distance learning following evidence that pupils do not learn as well in front of a screen when compared with on paper. Officers in Swansea also provided support for schools to develop their approach to assessing pupils' work through virtual platforms. They offered virtual training on approaches that include using mini quizzes, giving feedback using the live-chat facility on platforms like 'Microsoft Teams', using video recordings to explain new tasks and to identify misconceptions and offering whole-class feedback on common misconceptions. A few local authorities, including Cardiff, collaborated with organisations such as the Open University to support professional learning in schools. In Cardiff, schools and the Cardiff and Vale College worked with the Open University to deliver a programme of interactive online workshops, focused on pedagogy and effective learning design.

### **Cameo: Using evidence from communication with schools to inform professional learning**

Officers in Swansea carried out a survey with primary headteachers, seeking information on specific training needs during the pandemic. They analysed the responses and came up with a list of items for future webinars. These included developing the use of live sessions, how to use the tools available via Hwb and other useful platforms/apps and suggestions for easy-to-use tools for teachers to help them when designing online/distance learning activities. As a result, the local authority produced a comprehensive programme of webinars to address these.

- 43 Officers from local authorities and regional consortia used the initial lockdown period to engage with national and international research, to identify effective practice to share with schools. In Bridgend, school improvement partners collated evidence about learning from the Education Endowment Foundation (2020) whose findings include that the quality of teaching is more important than how it is delivered. This has helped schools in the local authority to think about their approaches to distance and blended learning. In Carmarthenshire, officers used the work of Michael Fullan as a basis for moving learning from a distance learning model used during the school closure period to a model that could be used as schools re-opened fully for the autumn term. In the EAS, officers adapted the approach of Simon Brakespear to help school leaders to see their response to the pandemic in phases and to identify what was important and different at each phase.

- 44 Officers from local authorities and regional consortia have started to put plans in place to evaluate the impact of their support for schools on pupils' learning. In Gwynedd, officers recognise that it is not yet possible to draw meaningful conclusions about schools' approaches to distance learning. However, following the first case of a school having to send home a significant cohort of pupils in the autumn term, officers evaluated the distance learning provision. They created a case study for other schools, outlining the implications and the factors that leaders and teachers need to consider when planning for pupils to learn remotely. Following cluster meetings with the regional school improvement service to discuss distance and blended learning, one school in Wrexham trialled using a digital distance learning approach while pupils were in class. One group of pupils completed activities and tasks online while the teacher used direct instruction with other pupils. This allowed teachers to support pupils to use software and upload work to a digital platform while they were in school. It also allowed the school to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and tasks set as distance learning. The school is adapting its approach following feedback from this process. The EAS carried out a survey to gain leaders' perceptions of their learning offer. Local authorities within the region are using this information to help them to develop an overview of their schools' provision. Across Wales it is too early to be able to evaluate fully the impact of this work on schools and pupils as processes to evaluate the quality of learning offers including distance learning are in the early stages of development.
- 45 Training to support teachers' digital competence continued in the autumn term. Officers in ERW provided a series of webinars for primary, secondary and special schools and PRUs that give an overview of the tools available through Hwb to support blended and distance learning, complementing their earlier work. The sessions included specific themes for school leaders, such as what to consider when experiencing individual year group isolation. These webinars also included recordings and live discussions with school leaders from around the region, which school leaders found reassuring when considering how best to implement their own plans. In addition, the team shared online safety and self-review tools, as well as curriculum support for specific areas, for example to develop teachers' practice with coding. A Google Classroom set up specifically for teaching assistants to develop their online skills has attracted over 200 participants. In our engagement calls with schools, headteachers identified the improvement in teachers' ICT skills and their confidence in the use of technology to support pupils' learning as a positive impact of the pandemic on schools. The need for teachers to put what they had learned into practice quickly made the professional learning immediately relevant to their needs.
- 46 Most consortia and local authorities found that, as professional learning moved online, more practitioners have taken up learning opportunities as they no longer involve full days out of school and materials can be accessed at any time. A majority of the support staff who responded to our survey said that they had received effective professional learning to support them to make a successful return to school. Despite the opportunities available for professional learning, our survey also found that 22% of teachers who responded do not feel that they have had sufficient opportunities to support their understanding of distance and blended learning.
- 47 The period since March 2020 has delivered many challenges for local authorities and regional consortia in their work to support schools. It has also provided opportunities



to think differently and to work in different ways. Officers are aware of the need to learn from the experience and are keen to maintain and build upon the new ways of working that have had a positive impact. The use of digital platforms to hold meetings and as a way of delivering professional learning has been both time and cost effective and has enabled more education staff to participate in these more frequently. In the spring and summer terms 2020, teachers had to respond quickly to the need to provide distance learning materials for pupils. This provision improved though the summer term and as the number of pupils needing to learn away from the classroom has increased in the autumn, the need to further improve and embed distance and blended learning provision remains a priority. The pandemic has reinforced issues that local authorities and consortia had already been working with schools to address. These include the impact of poverty on families and in particular on children's learning. Pupils across Wales have experienced the pandemic in very different ways as a result of their local and home circumstances. The initial lockdown period and the necessity for pupils to work at home for periods of time in the autumn term have highlighted the need for pupils to be able to work independently successfully and for schools to focus on supporting pupils to improve learning resilience.

## Supporting vulnerable pupils

### Preparing for pupils to return in September

- 48 Having briefly welcomed pupils back to their school or PRU at the end of the summer term, leaders' attention turned to supporting vulnerable pupils during the summer holiday as well as preparing for the autumn term. Local authorities organised various summer activities, often led by youth workers. These usually targeted the most vulnerable pupils, such as children looked after by the local authority and those whose behaviour in their community was a concern, and provided a range of useful activities to support personal and social skills as well as their wellbeing.
- 49 Many support services for vulnerable pupils continued through the summer holiday too, such as online counselling, welfare visits to families in need, helplines for those needing support. In Merthyr Tydfil, a local authority officer maintained contact through the summer holiday with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families to support them to remain engaged in learning, with schools reporting that a good proportion of these pupils returned to school in September 2020. In Torfaen, education welfare officers identified pupils who did not engage with the 'Check in, catch up, prepare for summer and September' sessions in schools at the end of the summer term (Welsh Government, 2020d). The officers then worked closely with families to support pupils to return to school in September.

#### **Cameo: Re-engaging pupils through summer activities**

Officers in Denbighshire recognised that some vulnerable pupils would benefit from additional input in order to successfully re-engage with learning. They secured grant funding to deliver engaging and enriching activities to target vulnerable young pupils and those from economically disadvantaged areas. The Education and Children's Services worked in partnership with the Youth Service and external partners to provide a summer holiday activity programme over five weeks. This helped to bridge the gap between the initial lockdown period and the full reopening of schools to all pupils in September by inspiring young people through sport, music, drama, team building and craft activities. Activities included lessons on African drumming, a drama workshop hosted by a West End star, and team games on a beach. All participants received free lunch and bus passes in order to facilitate attendance.

- 50 While scientists warned of the potential for a 'second wave' of COVID-19, this was unpredictable both in terms of timing and scale. The Welsh Government committed to returning all pupils full-time in the autumn, with scope for a staggered start in September. Local authority officers, and sometimes regional consortium officers, worked closely with school and PRU leaders across Wales to ensure that school sites were safe for pupils. In some cases, health and safety officers jointly carried out risk assessments with school and PRU leaders. In other cases, leaders carried out their own assessments and these were sent to officers to be checked. Local authorities have helpfully held drop-in online meetings or used a digital forum for headteachers to discuss health and safety issues with officers.

- 51 Where relevant, individual risk assessments were carried out for vulnerable pupils with special educational needs and those requiring extra support, and often local authority officers supported this process and assisted with any resulting concerns. For example, officers in Caerphilly worked with parents and school staff to discuss the use of PPE when a child with autistic spectrum condition spits when distressed. Officers provided staff in another school with surgical respiratory protection masks for when working with pupils who require aerosol or suctioning procedures.
- 52 Schools and PRUs across Wales prioritised pupils' wellbeing at the start of the autumn term. Regional consortia and local authorities provided professional learning, guidance and resources to help staff think through the potential issues. Much of the professional learning offered to leaders, teachers and support staff across Wales focused on understanding how trauma can affect children and young people, and how staff can identify those who are struggling and support them. For example, GwE offered a 'Return to school trauma-informed schools programme', which included practical strategies and key teaching and learning principles and models. In EAS, teaching assistants were offered training in delivering a 'coping and connecting' six-week intervention programme to support targeted vulnerable pupils settle back to school life. In Powys, existing school-to-school support continued, with staff at the PRU training school staff across the local authority on supporting pupils' behaviour and readiness to learn on their return to school.
- 53 Professional learning also focused on the importance of relationships, with schools and PRUs encouraged to give time to this at the start of the autumn term. For example, CSC purchased access to the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) for all schools, and ERW commissioned Professor Robin Banerjee to deliver professional learning to develop staff understanding of self-efficacy and connection as key to supporting wellbeing.
- 54 Some local authorities provided parents and carers with information and advice to support pupils' return to school. For example, Carmarthenshire created a 'Welcome back' pack that explained what pupils might experience when using school transport and practical suggestions on how to support their child's wellbeing.

**Cameo: Supporting vulnerable pupils' wellbeing needs in preparation of the return to school**

In collaboration with the Educational Psychology team, leaders and teachers in Carmarthenshire provided a 'One Page Profile' via Microsoft Forms for all pupils to complete before the 'Check-in, catch-up, prepare for summer and September' period. This was an effective approach to gain direct, individual information from pupils regarding their wellbeing during the initial lockdown. This information served as a guide for teachers to plan more diverse and bespoke provision on their return, especially for specific vulnerable groups such as pupils with SEN.

- 55 Most pupils were happy to return to school in September 2020, for the social contact with friends as well as to progress their learning. Many headteachers we contacted commented on how engaged most pupils were, and how positively they were accepting new routines and procedures. Our survey of pupils in October 2020 found

that 77% agreed or strongly agreed that felt safe in school. Prior to the pandemic, 89% of pupils, on average, told us they felt safe in their school when they surveyed as part of their school inspection. This indicates the anxiety that a few pupils were feeling on returning to school, despite the protective measures that were in place. In particular, pupils expressed concern about the unsafe behaviour of a very few pupils who did not follow their school's rules and put others at risk. Some school leaders have noted that enforced changes to how the school operates, such as staggered break times, zones for different year groups and one way systems, have had a positive impact on pupils' behaviours and they are considering which changes may be useful to continue when the pandemic is over.

- 56 Pupils who were moving to a new class within their school or PRU or a new school or PRU in September 2020 had missed out on usual transition activities, including visits to familiarise themselves with the site and staff. Schools and PRUs made up for the lack of visits and opportunities to meet new staff in the summer term through helpful video tours and staff introductions alongside information on websites to help pupils prepare for their transition. In our survey, 92% of pupils moving to a new class in September felt that teachers helped them settle, with only a very few disagreeing.
- 57 Some primary schools have commented that young children starting school for the first time in September 2020 are less ready for school than is usually the case. They also noticed that children that who had their first year in school disrupted by the initial lockdown had regressed in their readiness for learning. For example, schools identified weaknesses in the development of these pupils' social and communication skills, and more children than normal are unable to toilet and feed themselves. This is making it harder for young pupils to settle, and is stretching the resource of staff to support them.

**Cameo: Sharing a school's approach to supporting skills in the early years across Monmouthshire**

One primary school in Monmouthshire noticed that the sudden ending of school in March had a significant negative impact on pupils in the reception class. From March, many of these young pupils made less progress in relation to their personal, social and learning skills than would have normally been expected. To help address this, leaders, teachers and support staff worked with parents to create a framework of skills to tackle this deficit. The local authority noted that the school's strategy seemed to be successful and shared the learning from this with other schools..

- 58 While almost all pupils returned to school or PRU in September 2020, a very few did not and some parents opted to educate their child at home. The number of pupils being educated at home has been steadily rising in recent years, but there has been a sharper increase this year. Around half of local authorities report that the number of families choosing to educate their children at home has increased as a result of the pandemic.
- 59 The Welsh Government postponed the introduction of statutory guidance and regulations on elective home education due to COVID-19, so local authorities

continue to have limited responsibilities and powers in relation to ensuring that every child's right to an education are upheld. Local authorities have varying degrees of success in their efforts to encourage these families to engage voluntarily. For the large proportion of families that are willing to engage, local authorities offer varying extent of support to parents and carers of children educated at home. For example, in Anglesey, officers established an elective home education forum to help to strengthen the procedures around home education and in Neath Port Talbot inclusion officers worked with schools to provide guidance to parents of pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

- 60 A very few pupils did not return to their school or PRU because of specific health and safety concerns that meant the risk to themselves or staff was too great. This included, for example, pupils with severe health conditions and those with extremely challenging behaviour. In these rare instances, local authorities have worked with schools and PRUs to ensure that these pupils can continue to learn from home as much as possible.
- 61 Local authorities often proactively supported vulnerable young people to return to school in September 2020. For example, in Ceredigion a team of youth specialists was attached to each secondary school. Youth workers, specialist behaviour workers and youth justice workers supported pupils who were known to be at risk of not engaging in their education. This support, in addition to that provided by the schools themselves, contributed to high attendance rates for these pupils.

### Supporting wellbeing

- 62 For children and young people already challenged by several adverse childhood experiences, the pandemic may have magnified the challenges they face and taken a heavy toll on their wellbeing. Even children and young people in stable family environments with very few or no prior adverse childhood experiences have been significantly affected by the pandemic. For example, time away from friends caused by lockdowns, isolation periods or having to remain in tight bubbles at school can have an adverse impact on pupils' social development and their mental health. Indeed, schools and local authorities noted that some of the pupils they had become concerned about were not pupils that they would previously had recognised as vulnerable.
- 63 During the initial lockdown, schools and local authorities refined their approaches and systems for identifying and monitoring vulnerable pupils and sharing information between agencies. In Cardiff, for example, the local authority set up a new data system for collecting information on vulnerable pupils. The information was reviewed weekly by a 'joint vulnerable pupils panel', which planned a co-ordinated response across services.
- 64 During the initial lockdown, local authority services had to respond rapidly to support the wellbeing of all pupils, and particularly those known to be vulnerable. Where local authorities already had effective joint working across services and external agencies, this was evident in the efficiency with which they responded to needs. In authorities where collaboration is less well established, the pandemic has been a catalyst to strengthen joint working. For example, Gwynedd's education psychology

service has collaborated with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to develop a new approach to supporting pupils who are absent from school because of their emotional wellbeing.

**Cameo: Multi-disciplinary working – sharing information and providing solutions**

A key feature of Bridgend's ability to adapt and respond quickly to the needs of children and young people, particularly those identified as vulnerable, has been the strong connections that exist across and within service areas. For example, the pre-existing 'early help locality service model' across the borough helps to ensure that professionals share relevant information with one another. Multi-disciplinary staff are co-located at three sites across the borough. Discussions and solution-focused work with families involve different specialist services. This integrated approach helps to ensure also that support is prioritised and allocated appropriately.

The development of the multi-agency safeguarding hub, in place for the past two years, has also contributed to a sharing of intelligence around safeguarding concerns for individuals. Colleagues from South Wales Police, the local health board and local authority are co-located and provide a single point of contact for agencies to refer into.

- 65 In the summer term 2020, school leaders often noted that they had been inundated with information, guidance and suggested resources and activities to support pupils' wellbeing and to support vulnerable pupils. This was a reflection of how all agencies, including local authorities, regional consortia, health services, police and justice services, local and national voluntary organisations, were keen to support children, young people and their families. Taking account of feedback from senior leaders, agencies helpfully rationalised their communication with schools during the autumn term.
- 66 In most cases, local authorities have ensured that statutory processes for pupils in relation to special education needs (SEN), including assessments and annual reviews, continued during the autumn term. Where there have been delays, this has most commonly been due to the capacity of educational psychology services and other specialist services, caused by staff absence or challenges in delivering services remotely. In Wrexham, the local authority has employed a locum educational psychologist to boost capacity in their service and help complete outstanding assessments. Local authority services, schools and PRUs have adapted so families and professionals involved with their child's education can meet online where necessary to facilitate statutory processes. During the autumn term, services gradually resumed face-to-face work to support assessment of pupils with SEN, although headteachers were frustrated by inconsistent approaches across agencies to returning to face-to-face work.
- 67 Local authority services to support pupils with special educational needs have found ways to continue support for pupils. For example, in Caerphilly, the regional SENCOM service for pupils with sensory difficulties has worked remotely with pupils through video conferencing technology and provided bespoke training to school staff so that they can support pupils with hearing or visual impairments.

- 68 Our survey of parents and carers in October 2020 found that the majority of those with children who receive additional support agreed that the school or PRU is considering their child's needs and providing appropriate resources, support and guidance for them. A similar proportion felt that the school or PRU makes appropriate arrangements for their child to discuss their feelings, health and wellbeing or concerns. On both matters, a few parents disagreed. Where parents and carers had concerns, these related to poor communication about how their child's needs would be met, support outlined in a statement for special educational needs not being provided, reduced support for pupils with autistic spectrum condition, and general concerns about the usual support not being provided.
- 69 The Welsh Government gave local authorities additional funding this year to increase the capacity of counselling services. These services are provided directly by some local authorities, although more commonly the service is commissioned from an external provider. In some cases, the funding has been used to extend access to Year 4 and Year 5 children as local authorities are only required to provide a service for Year 6 children in primary school. In the Vale of Glamorgan, the local authority has employed a play therapist to provide support to younger children in primary schools, to complement the counselling service. Lots of counsellors have completed additional training in counselling online. While some counselling services resumed face-to-face sessions with children and young people during the autumn term, others continued to provide sessions online or over the telephone as they did during the initial lockdown. Young people around Wales have mixed views about counselling via video or telephone calls: some find it easier to talk to a counsellor this way whereas others have not engaged and are waiting for face-to-face sessions to resume.
- 70 Some local authorities and consortia are supporting schools to use their 'Recruit, recover, raise standards' programme grant from the Welsh Government to increase capacity to support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils. For example, in Ceredigion, schools have used the funding to increase the hours of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, working under the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service 'In-Reach' pilot.
- 71 Safeguarding work with children, young people and families continued online through the autumn term when circumstances meant that this was the best option. While the rate of children placed on the child protection register was a little lower than usual during the initial lockdown period, the rate rose through August 2020 and peaked in September before dropping again through the autumn term. The peak rate was not a significant increase compared to typical fluctuations or the long term trend for rising numbers of children being placed on the register nationally. There is no clear correlation between the local authorities seeing the highest increases in the rate of children placed on the child protection register and the incidence of COVID-19 in the community.
- 72 Young people have often spent more time online than usual due to periods of self-isolation and restrictions on activities that they would usually be involved in. In Monmouthshire, the local authority recognised the increased safeguarding risk associated with this. Local authority officers worked with their schools, the PRU and the Home Office to hold more frequent Channel Panels to review concerns about pupils relating to extremism or radicalisation.

- 73 School attendance was understandably affected by COVID-19 in the autumn term. After pupils gradually returned at the start of September 2020, attendance peaked at 88% at the start of October. Attendance dropped through October as the incidence of COVID-19 began to rise sharply in some parts of Wales. Attendance was 90% in the first week after the firebreak in November, which included half-term, before dropping through the rest of the autumn term. Attendance in the autumn term is highest for pupils in primary schools, with the exception of nursery pupils. Pupils in Years 11, 12 and 13 have the lowest attendance. Much of the absence is explained by pupils having to self-isolate. Although recorded as authorised absence, schools provide distance learning for these pupils, although for logistical reasons there is often a delay of a day or so before the full distance learning offer is in place for self-isolating pupils. School leaders report that pupils often make slower progress in their learning when self-isolating.
- 74 There is a close correlation between school attendance rates and local COVID-19 rates. Through the autumn term, pupils were affected unequally as enforced self-isolation due to close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case affected certain parts of Wales more than others. Some pupils experienced several weeks of distance learning during the autumn term due to self-isolation, whereas other pupils were in school every day.
- 75 The 'Test, Trace and Protect' (TTP) strategy in Wales is a partnership between the Welsh Government, local authorities and NHS organisations. The purpose of the strategy is 'to enhance health surveillance in the community, undertake effective and extensive contact tracing, and support people to self-isolate where required to do so' (Welsh Government, 2020f). The strategy appears to have been implemented slightly differently across Wales when a positive COVID-19 case has been confirmed in a school. In some local areas, much larger groups of pupils have been regarded as a close contact compared to other areas despite schools having similar protective measures in place. This has particularly affected older pupils in secondary schools, with some of these pupils having several weeks away from school in self-isolation during the autumn term. The local variation in implementation of the TTP strategy has impacted pupils' progress and wellbeing unequally across Wales.
- 76 When pupils are required to self-isolate, some local authorities work with schools to share this information across services and with partners so that vulnerable pupils can be offered additional support. For example, in cases where a pupil is on the child protection register in Denbighshire, officers make contact on the first day of self-isolation to ensure that support is in place. When several hundred pupils from a school serving an area of high deprivation were required to self-isolate, Denbighshire's Youth Support Team worked constructively in partnership with local police officers to support young people who were gathering outside during the day instead of self-isolating.
- 77 Schools, PRUs and education services sometimes reported that they had noted a rise in concerns about pupils' mental health. All local authorities have sought to ensure that schools and PRUs are aware of all the support that is available for pupils struggling with their mental health.



**Cameo: Guidance on supporting learners' mental health and wellbeing**

From the outset, Swansea has prioritised the health and wellbeing of learners and staff. The improved sharing of information across the local authority and with external agencies during the pandemic, allowed officers to focus on common issues affecting learners across Swansea. In particular it became evident that there could be an increase of learners self-harming, suffering from anxiety and depression or attempting to take their own lives. As a result, the local authority produced timely guidance for schools to support their learners and information on where to seek further help. The guidance was also shared with a neighbouring local authority to help support their learners.

**Supporting vulnerable pupils**

- 78 Schools have found it particularly challenging to support all their vulnerable pupils. Our survey of support staff found that many of them feel that they have been providing effective support to vulnerable pupils, with hardly any disagreeing. In the same survey, just over half of teachers felt that they were able to meet the needs of their vulnerable pupils, with around two-in-ten teachers disagreeing.
- 79 Children and young people who are Gypsy, Roma or Travellers often miss more school than most pupils for cultural reasons. Local authorities have worked hard to maintain contact with families and encourage them to return to school in September. For example, officers in Carmarthenshire used an existing WhatsApp support group to keep families engaged and as a platform for offering support where needed. This authority is also providing these families with access to a tailored package of activities to support language skills as this was identified as a common concern.
- 80 Pupils with English or Welsh as an additional language are particularly vulnerable to making little progress when they are expected to learn from home, as was the case during the initial lockdown and periods of self-isolation in the autumn term. Often these pupils' parents or carers do not understand English or Welsh and therefore find it difficult to support their child's learning. In Newport, the Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS) continued to support pupils at home during the autumn term. Multi-lingual staff in GEMS kept in regular contact with families affected, to support pupils to continue learning as well as to monitor their wellbeing.
- 81 Operation Encompass is a relatively new scheme where police services commit to contacting key staff in relevant schools before the start of the next school day if they have been called to an incident of domestic abuse at a child's home. This early information enables schools to offer immediate support to pupils affected. As lots of schools remained in contact with vulnerable families during the school summer holidays and the two-week firebreak in the autumn term, authorities such as Cardiff worked with police services to extend the scheme to operate through these periods too.
- 82 Children and young people looked after by local authorities are among the most vulnerable in Wales, both in terms of their wellbeing as well as their education outcomes. Local authorities have often added in extra checks and support for these

children and young people during the pandemic. For example, in Bridgend local authority officers visited care placements weekly, which helped them to identify potential placement breakdowns and be proactive in providing additional support where needed rather than waiting for placements to fail. In Gwynedd, the local authority provided looked-after children with a laptop to enable them to continue learning at home during lockdown or self-isolation periods.

- 83 Pupils in work-based learning have faced redundancy or anxiety related to potential redundancy during the autumn term. Some vocational courses, such as hair and beauty, have been significantly affected by the pandemic. This has disproportionately affected vulnerable pupils who are more likely than their peers to follow vocational routes at ages 14-19. For example, older secondary-aged pupils in Merthyr could not continue with junior apprenticeships run by the local college. This caused considerable disappointment for these young people, the vast majority of whom returned to school full-time while the local authority had to make alternative provision for the rest.

#### **Cameo: Local authority support for vocational provision**

In one secondary school in Pembrokeshire, leaders had already planned to evaluate and review its vocational provision during the last academic year. They worked with a local authority officer to carry out this evaluation. The school no longer employs an external vocational provider and has created its own vocational provision. It has employed three staff from the previous provider and a qualified teacher to supervise the provision. This has resulted in a significant financial saving for the school as well as allowing leaders to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the provision more closely. Around 230 learners currently access the vocational provision as part of their curriculum. The school has worked with the local authority so pupils from other providers can also access this provision. Through its vocational courses, the school now provides a crèche, nursery, and a motor vehicle workshop that serves the local community.

- 84 It is difficult to assess the impact of the pandemic on the proportion of young people in Wales who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Work to monitor and support young people to secure a suitable destination at the end of Year 11 into the autumn was significantly affected. Given the pandemic's national impact on employment and training generally, it is not surprising that early information from some local authorities suggests that more young people are NEET at age 16 this year than in recent years. In Swansea, pupils that schools and the PRU had identified at risk of becoming NEET were prioritised for support in the summer 2020. The young people were referred to multi-agency early help hubs for support and guidance on their next steps, and local authority officers continued to monitor their progress in the autumn term and provide support where necessary. As a result, nearly all of these vulnerable pupils have been engaged in some form of education, employment or training during the autumn, despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.

**Cameo: Supporting disengaged pupils**

Wrexham local authority planned a programme to target Year 9 learners who have become increasingly disengaged with education during the COVID-19 period or have become vulnerable due to their COVID-19 experiences. The programme includes 15 weekly sessions where between 10 and 15 pupils from six secondary schools take part in activities and challenges to develop their engagement with learning and resilience. Activities include problem-solving workshops, outdoor activities, workshops with motivational speakers and support from Careers Wales delivered online.

- 85 Pupils eligible for free school meals have poorer outcomes than their peers. The pandemic has hampered the efforts of the education system to support these pupils to achieve better outcomes than their predecessors. Headteachers have told us that this group of pupils made slower progress in their learning during the initial lockdown, with some pupils returning the school with weaker language and numeracy skills than before the lockdown started. In addition to the annual Pupil Development Grant, the Welsh Government has provided schools with additional funding through the 'Recruit, recover, raise standards' grant. Local authorities and regional consortia have advised schools on how this grant could be used to fund suitable strategies to support pupils eligible for free school meals to catch up on their learning during the autumn term and beyond. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the local authority has worked with the Child Poverty Action Group to strengthen its support for pupils living in poverty. For example, a cluster of schools has focused on identifying the local barriers to learning that exist because of poverty currently and is working with the Action Group and local authority to address these.
- 86 Rising obesity in children and young people is a national concern as it leaves them susceptible to poor physical health. Obesity is primarily caused by what children and young people eat and drink and how physically active they are. It appears that pupils have had fewer opportunities to be physically active at school during the autumn term than would usually be the case. In our learner survey, 77% agree they have enough chance to exercise, which is lower than the average response from inspection surveys where 86% of pupils agree. A lot of schools have reduced the time pupils have for lunch breaks in order to protect bubbles of pupils using facilities, meaning that pupils have less time to play and be physically active. Very few schools ran any after school clubs during the autumn term that involved physical activity, and the usual sports competitions between schools have not taken place. Local authorities have taken different approaches to access to outdoor play equipment and parks, and leisure facilities and gyms have been forced to close locally and nationally at times due to government restrictions.
- 87 Local authority youth workers played a significant role in supporting vulnerable children, young people and their families during the initial lockdown and have continued to provide support through the autumn term. Youth workers are often highly skilled at building relationships quickly with young people, gaining their trust and finding creative ways to support young people, especially those who are at risk of disengaging with their education. Youth workers already used technology to communicate with young people, and have built on this during the pandemic by

setting up more online spaces where young people can connect safely with each other and with youth workers to socialise and discuss issues that interest or concern them. Some of these spaces were set up for specific groups, for example for young people wishing to chat online in Welsh or for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people.

- 88 Youth workers have struggled to maintain contact with a very few vulnerable young people who do not have regular internet access or do not like to use online tools. Despite the effectiveness of online communications, young people often regret the lack of in-person social interaction they have had this year. Where safe to, youth workers have re-established opportunities to meet with young people in person. For example, youth workers in Powys have visited the key market towns between 5pm and 7pm during the autumn to engage with young people informally, which has provided useful opportunities to check on their wellbeing and help them to access support if required.
- 89 Despite having extremely heavy workloads, some local authority services have created space to consider what is working well and how they could improve the way they are supporting vulnerable pupils and their families.

#### **Cameo: Evaluating family experiences**

The ALN and Social Inclusion team in Conwy is eager to learn more about the effect of this pandemic on vulnerable learners and their families. As a result, officers are involved in a project that is based on 'Evaluating family experiences during lockdown', including focus on COVID-19 bereavement support and enhanced counselling support. This has been supplemented by training for individual schools delivered by the Educational Psychology Service on request. This is in preparation for another possible lockdown situation.

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## Appendix 1: Evidence base

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As part of the work we engaged in discussions with 340 schools and PRUs across Wales and held meetings with staff in every local authority and regional consortia.

We issued surveys to seek the views of:

- leaders
- teachers
- support staff
- governors
- parents/carers
- learners in key stages 2 and above

In addition, we looked at a range of documentary evidence provided by local authorities and regional consortia as well as nationally available guidance, data and research.

## Appendix 2

In addition to the calls to schools and LA, we issued and promoted surveys to stakeholders.

We had individual surveys for learners, parents or carers, school or PRU leaders, teachers, support staff and governors or members of PRU management committees. Some of the questions were directed at specific groups within those populations, so not all questions have been responded by all participants.

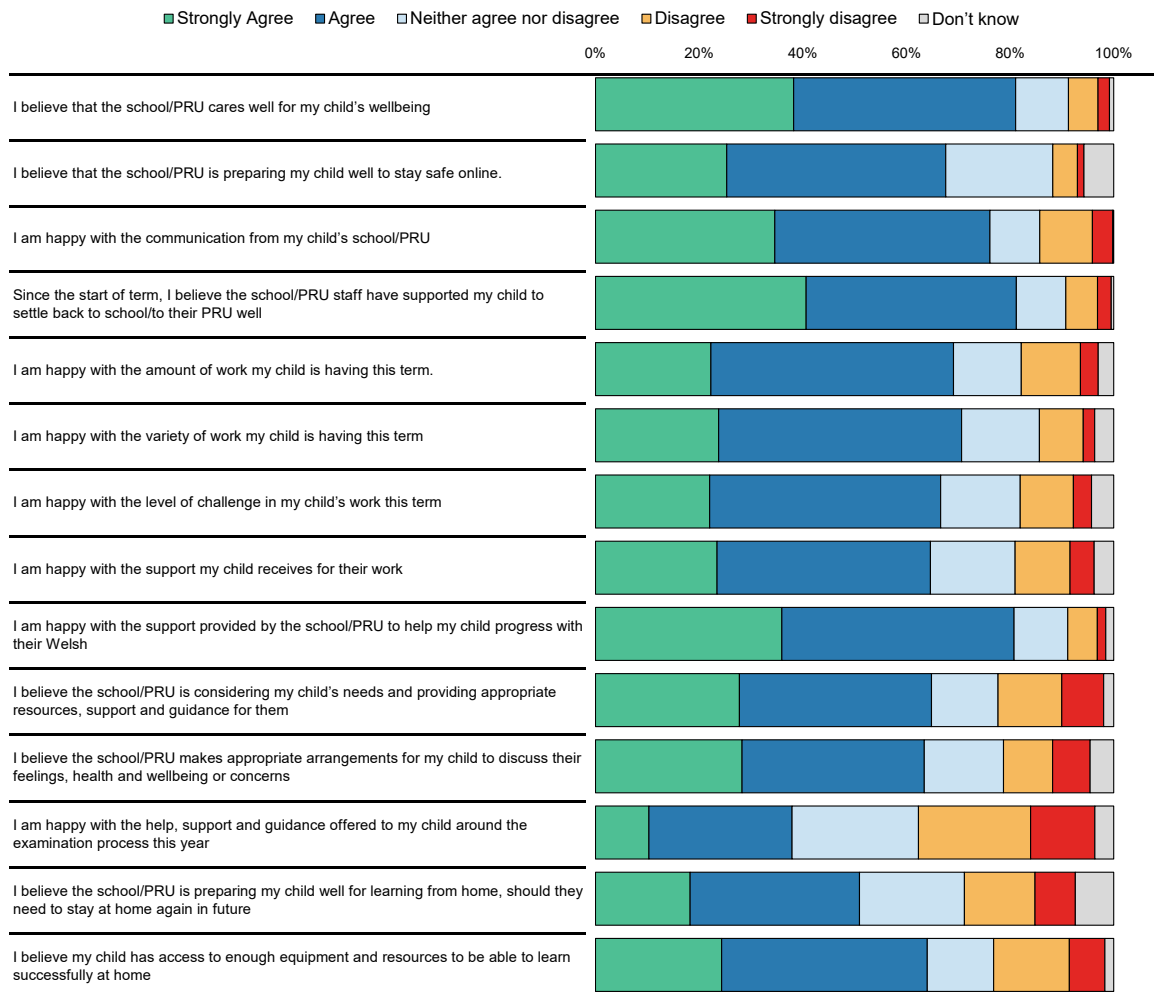
The responses are summarised below.

Stakeholders were also able to leave a comment to explain their answers or provide additional information. These were analysed and the information used to inform this report.

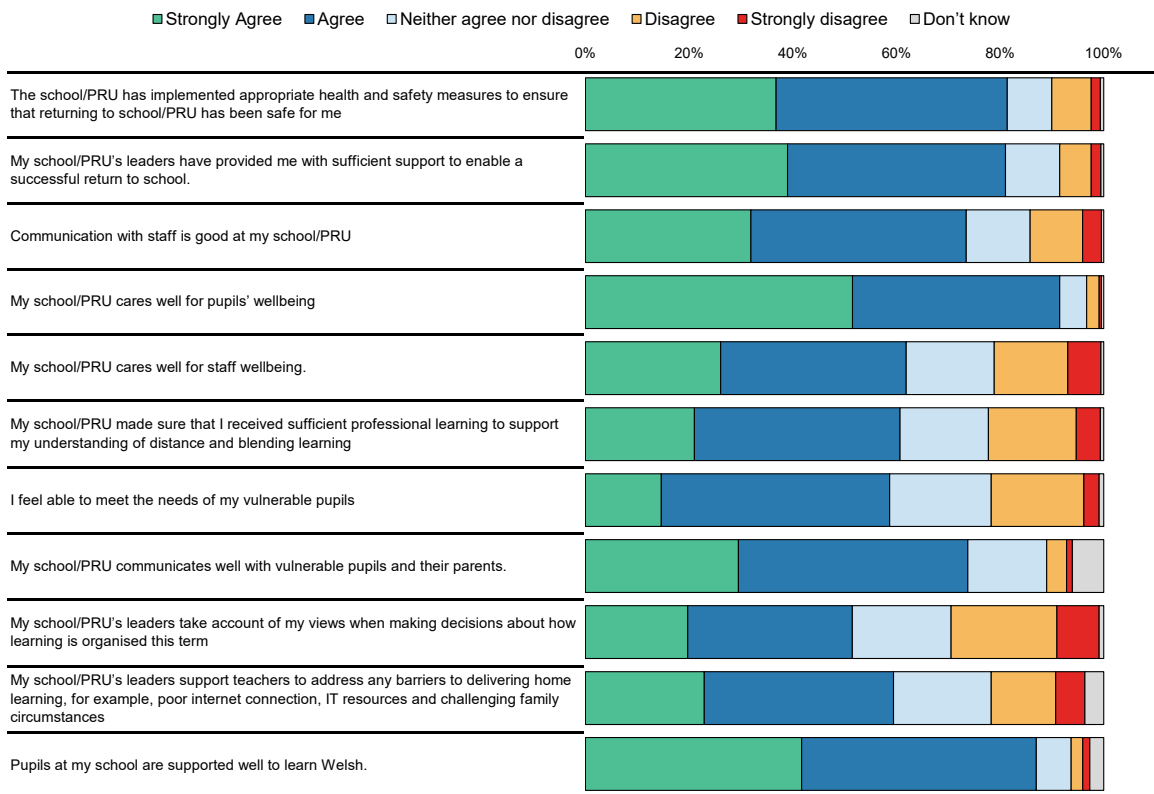
### Learners (760 responses)



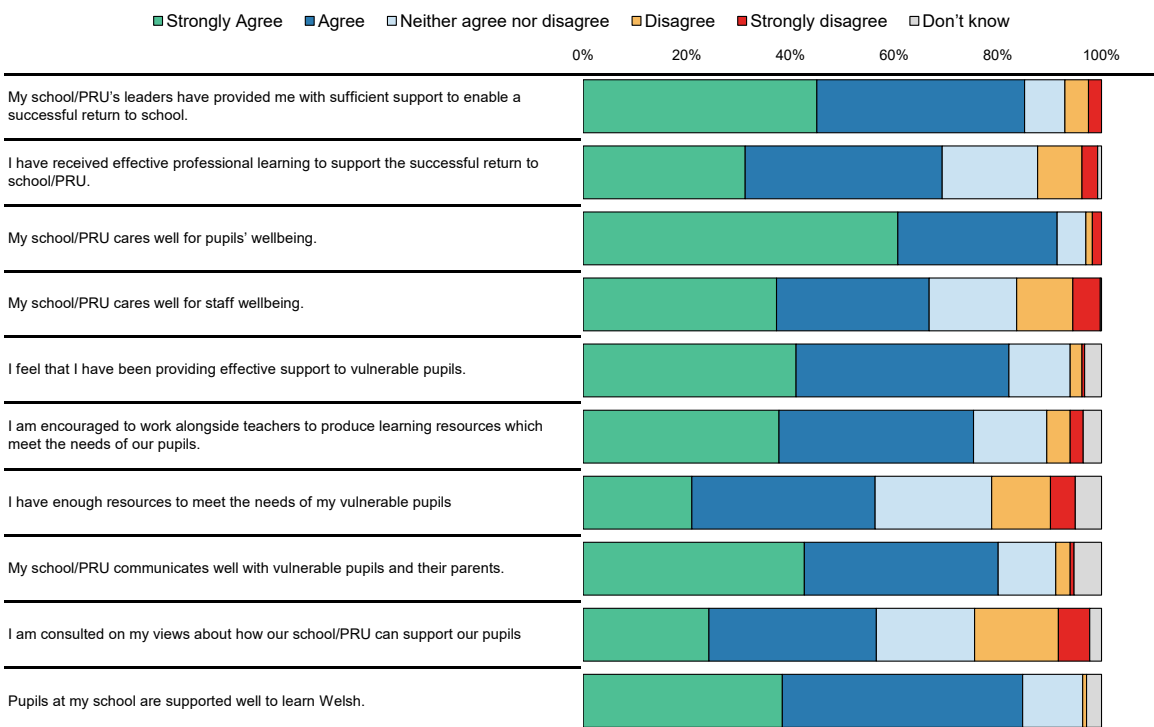
## Parents and carers (3620 responses)



## Teachers (908 responses)

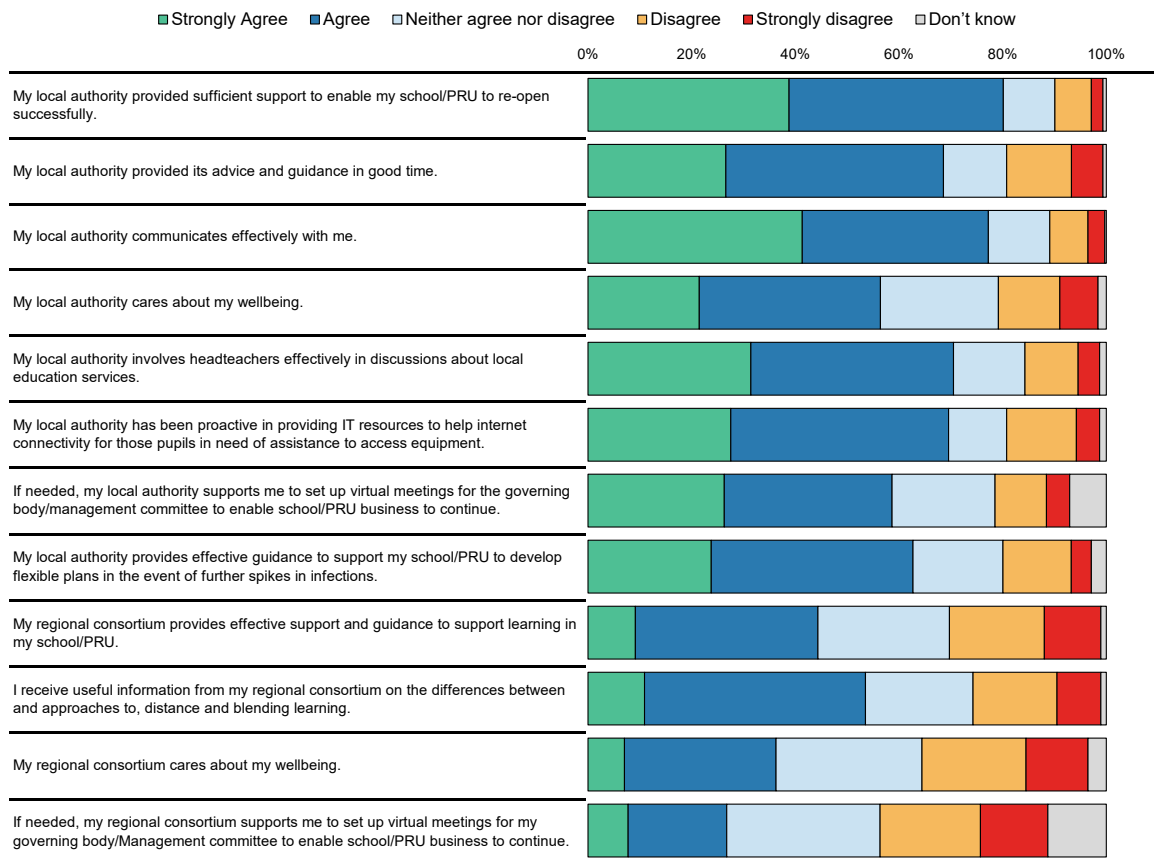


## Support staff (397 responses)

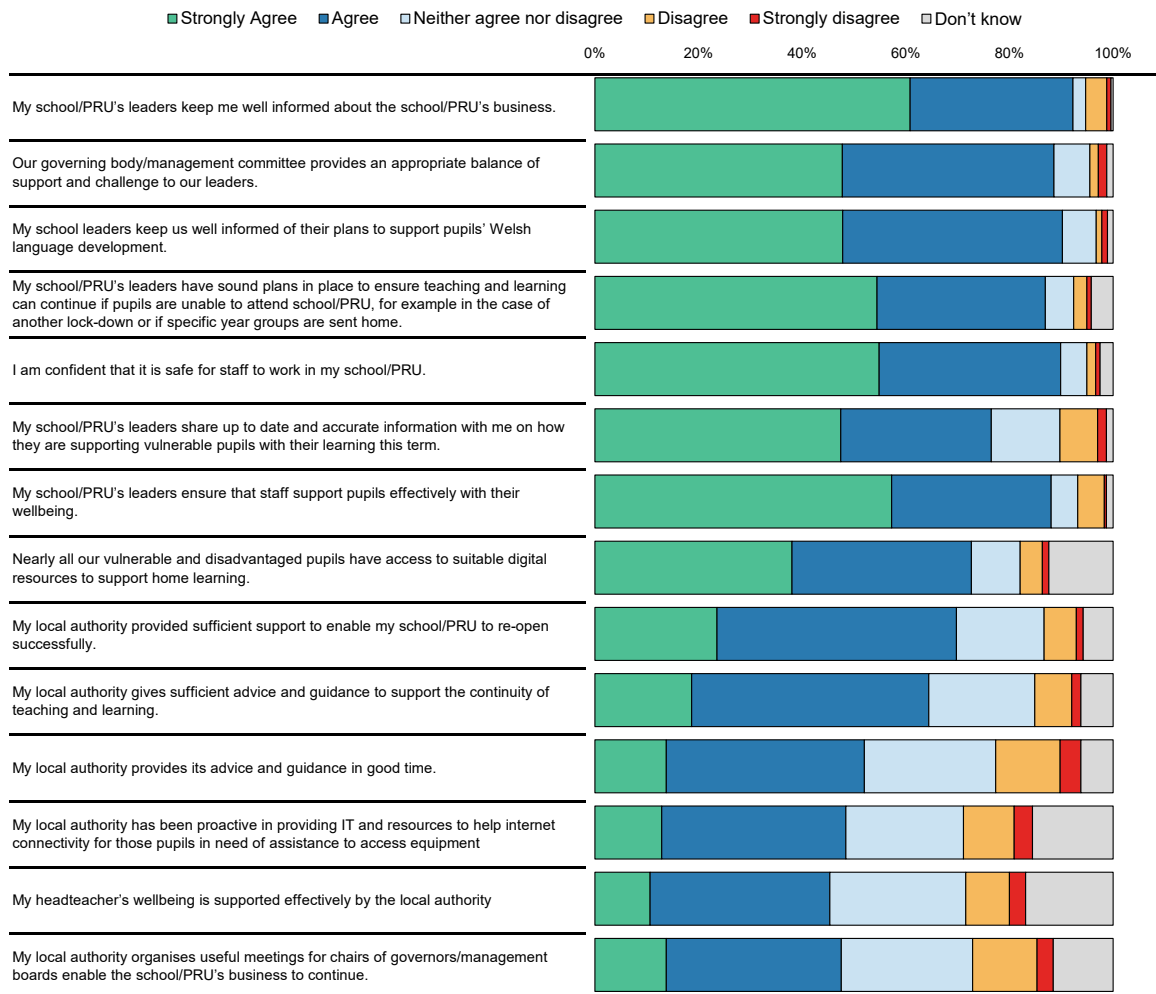




## Leaders (312 responses)



## Governors (245 responses)



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## Appendix 3: Estyn publications

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### Guidance

- [Advice for school and PRU leaders and governors on how to continue with school and PRU business during the Covid-19 pandemic](#)
- [Arrangements for September 2020 Planned approaches across maintained schools and PRUs](#)
- [Cameos and ideas for continuity of school business during Covid-19](#)
- [Cameos and ideas from schools and PRUs on continuing with school business](#)
- [Key principles to support the continuation of school and PRU business](#)
- [Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from adult learning in the community partnerships](#)
- [Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from further education colleges](#)
- [Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from primary schools](#)
- [Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from PRUs](#)
- [Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from secondary schools](#)
- [Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from special schools](#)
- [Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from work-based learning providers](#)
- [Engagement work: Primary sector update – autumn 2020](#)
- [Engagement work: Secondary sector update – autumn 2020](#)
- [Engagement work: All-age school sector update – autumn 2020](#)
- [Engagement work: Maintained special school and pupil referral unit \(PRU\) sector update – autumn 2020](#)
- [Engagement work: Post-16 sector update – autumn 2020](#)

## Thematic reports

- Community schools: families and communities at the heart of school life [thematic report](#) and [training materials](#)
- [Insights into how independent schools and specialist colleges have responded during the COVID–19 pandemic](#)
- Learner resilience – building resilience in primary schools, secondary schools and pupil referral units [thematic report](#) and [training materials](#)

## Blog posts

- [Adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\) - how can schools support children and young people who live in difficult circumstances?](#)
- [Is your school one that puts families and communities at the heart of its work?](#)
- [Now learners have returned to schools and colleges, what part have we played and how will our role change in the future?](#)
- [Our support for Welsh education and training in the current climate](#)
- [What can schools and PRUs do to strengthen pupils' resilience?](#)
- [Working together to support teaching and learning during COVID-19](#)

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## Appendix 4: Timeline

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## March 2020



- Chief Inspector for Wales announces immediate suspension of all of Estyn's inspections.
- Minister for Education announces that schools will close for statutory provision of education by 20 March. Also, announces suspension of GCSE and A level examinations for summer 2020.



## April 2020

- Suspension of the Childcare Offer for Wales. Funding to be used to support vulnerable children and the childcare costs of key workers.
- Welsh Government announces £1.25 million for additional mental health support for children who may be experiencing increased stress or anxiety as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak. They announce £3 million for local authorities to purchase hardware and secure internet connectivity to ensure learners in Wales are not 'digitally excluded'.
- Estyn release advice for school and PRU leaders on how to continue with school and PRU business. In collaboration with Welsh Government, regional consortia and ADEW we release 'Developing Approaches to Support Distance Learning'.
- The Minister for Education sets out five key principles for when and how schools would return.



## May 2020



- Welsh Government announces £3.75 million of funding to support mental health in schools and publishes a COVID-19 Resilience Plan for the post 16 sectors, including further and higher education, apprenticeships, employability and adult learning.



## June 2020

- Further education colleges and work-based learning providers begin to re-open for face-to-face learning for a priority groups of learners.
- Minister for Education announces that she will use the Coronavirus Act 2020 to disapply temporarily basic curriculum requirements for Wales.
- Most schools re-open to pupils to provide an opportunity for them to 'Check in, Catch up and prepare for summer, and September'.



## July 2020

- Estyn publishes several thematic reports and sector specific insights to support Wales to keep learning. In conjunction with the four regional consortia we also release 'Models of blended Learning' guidance to help from September.
- Welsh Government introduces the Curriculum and Assessment Bill to provide a legislative framework for the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. They announce the 'Recruit, recover and raise standards' scheme to employ 900 extra teaching staff in schools.
- Welsh Government announces additional funding of over £50 million for universities and colleges to maintain jobs in teaching, research and student services, invest in projects to support economic recovery, and support students suffering from financial hardship.



## August 2020

- Wales's Childcare Offer is re-established. Working parents are again able to access 30 hours of early education and care.
- Estyn releases 'Planned approaches across maintained schools and PRUs', to capture a variety of approaches in response to common challenges across different education sectors.
- Welsh Government pledges an additional £4 million to support childcare providers affected by COVID-19 and further funding of up to £264m for local authorities to support a range of services, such as social care, education and leisure.
- Education Secretaries for Wales, England and Northern Ireland announce that exam results will be based on teacher assessment.
- Minister for Education guarantees that learners' final A Level grade will not be lower than their AS grade. Published GCSE and revised A-level results based on teachers' assessments show a notable increase in grades over previous years.
- The Minister for Education announces an independent review of the arrangements for awarding grades for the 2020 summer examinations.

## September 2020



- All pupils return to school, phasing in during the first two weeks of term.
- Minister for Education announces a commitment to provide free face coverings for all learners in secondary school and further education settings.
- Minister for Education announces that all pupils eligible for free school meals will continue to receive provisions if they are shielding or have to self-isolate.
- Estyn begins engagement calls to schools, PRUs, and post-16 settings on request from the Welsh Government to carry out a thematic review of the extent and impact of local authorities' and regional consortia's approaches to supporting schools, their school communities, governing bodies and learners. Estyn also opens a survey for learners, governors, parents and school staff to share their experiences.



## October 2020

- The Education Policy Institute (EPI) publishes a report that describes the way the Welsh Government provided laptops and wi-fi devices to address the lack of access to online learning caused by the coronavirus pandemic as 'commendable'. The report states that, in contrast to other UK nations, the Welsh Government was able to draw on 'well established infrastructure to act quickly following the closures'.
- Minister for Education publishes an updated action plan setting out the next steps in Wales' reform journey, ahead of the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales in 2022. The action plan, known as Our National Mission, shows the steps the Welsh Government has taken in response to the coronavirus pandemic and its response to the independent report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Minister for Education announces that "there will be an uplift of pay to reward our highly skilled and hardworking teachers in Wales." This includes an agreement in principle to accept all of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body's recommendations for 2020/21.
- Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services announces £12.5m package of funding to support vulnerable children and families.

## November 2020



- Pupils in Years 9-13 remain at home for the week after half-term as part of the national 'firebreak'.
- Minister for Education announces that there will be no end of year exams for learners taking GCSEs, AS levels or A levels in 2021. In place of exams, the Welsh Government intends to work with schools and colleges to take forward teacher managed assessments, including assessments that will be externally set and marked but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision.
- Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services launches the new 'Parenting. Give it Time' campaign providing information, support and advice for parents. The new campaign covers issues reflecting parents' concerns during the pandemic, including how to understand and respond to children's behaviour.



# December 2020

- Estyn publishes its insight reports on the immediate effects of the pandemic on schools, PRUs and all age settings. These reports summarise the findings made from the engagement calls carried out during September and October.
- Estyn publishes the Chief Inspector's Annual Report for 2019-2020. This annual report reviews the standards and quality of education and training in Wales from September 2019 to March 2020. It also offers an initial account of how schools and other education and training providers supported pupils and students during lockdown while providing continuity of learning for them remotely.
- Minister for Education decides that all secondary schools and colleges in Wales will move to online learning for the last week of term, with local decisions to be made about whether or not other schools would be open that week.



## Glossary

<b>Distance learning</b>	Where work is set and/or lessons broadcast (live or pre-recorded) to learners at home. This means that they are not required to attend school to access.
<b>Blended learning</b>	Where learners are provided with a combination of face-to-face learning provided in school, which is complemented by cohesively planned distance learning tasks and activities
<b>CSC</b>	The regional consortium for school improvement for central south Wales
<b>EAS</b>	The regional consortium for school improvement for south east Wales
<b>ERW</b>	The regional consortium for school improvement for south west Wales
<b>GwE</b>	The regional consortium for school improvement for north Wales

### Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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Dear Arwyn,

During the early autumn term, the Welsh Government asked us to undertake a review of local authorities and regional consortia's work in supporting their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020.

This letter outlines the outcome of this work in GwE. The content of the letter is based on virtual meetings with officers, as well as information from a sample of schools and PRUs in the local authorities across the GwE region. We have also considered the supporting documentation provided by GwE officers and the feedback from surveys of school/PRU leaders, governors, teachers and support staff, parents and pupils. We have referred to the outcomes of the surveys where relevant, although the surveys were mainly be used to inform the national report which was published on our website on 15 January. Here is a [link](#) to that report.

We would like to thank your staff for giving of their time to discuss their work with us and for providing additional information on request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Meilyr Rowlands".

**Meilyr Rowlands**  
**Her Majesty's Chief Inspector**

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## **The regional consortia's work to support schools and PRUs: March – August 2020**

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### **Leadership and collaboration**

Educational portfolio holders and directors of education from the six local authorities worked with GwE to discuss the effect of the pandemic on education. They agreed a consistent regional approach to try to mitigate its effects.

GwE leaders worked closely with local authority managers to develop and share regional guidance to support schools and PRUs through the pandemic. At the beginning of the lockdown period, a communication strategy was agreed with the directors of the six local authorities and GwE. This strategy included Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) contacting schools regularly to support headteachers and alleviate concerns. Regular contact with schools in order to support the health and wellbeing of staff and pupils was a consortium priority and schools welcomed this approach. In a number of instances, the consortium deployed its staff to a local authority to support with essential services or to schools and PRUs to support them to remain open.

The consortium continued to operate its governance structure from the start of lockdown. The GwE Joint Committee met virtually and considered revisions to its plans and work due to the pandemic. The Joint Committee also continued with matters that they would usually consider, such as the service's value for money and audit reports. The GwE Managing Director and the Joint Committee worked well to anticipate and plan for issues proactively. For example, they discussed establishing a regional approach to the transition of pupils back into schools in good time before any final decisions were made nationally. This enabled local authorities, GwE and schools to prepare and respond quickly when Welsh Government instructed schools to reopen for more learners.

Schools and providers became more accustomed to working virtually, and received support from the regional consortium and local authorities to develop their ways of working. Many schools mentioned their appreciation of the regular online contact meetings with their SIA. These included meetings within school clusters across the region to share regular updates, to consider any lessons learned and to ensure headteachers were able to share any problems and concerns.

The consortium worked well nationally to develop distance learning guidance for schools in collaboration with other regions. The region has continued to look at international research and sourced external advice to improve practice.

### **Promoting learning**

From March 2020, GwE adapted its work to focus on five distinct phases. These were the pre-lockdown phase; supporting schools at the beginning of lockdown; distance learning; supporting schools to re-open and the blended learning phase. GwE recognised that its SIAs would have an evolving role in supporting schools to develop their distance learning approaches.

GwE worked closely with its local authorities to share guidance and advice to schools during each phase. Resources, websites and professional learning materials were shared with schools including 'How to' videos to help teachers develop their approaches to distance learning. Most school leaders feel that GwE have provided helpful support through its digital platform, the 'GwE Support Centre'. This contains all the resources and materials produced by the consortium during the COVID-19 period. GwE ensured that staff and learners could access a range of classroom learning materials, such as support for maintaining and developing literacy, numeracy and digital skills. GwE established an online classroom for each key stage and uploaded an initial bank of practical resources and links for schools to adapt and use with their own learners. The platform also included resources help to maintain connections between teaching and support staff during this period of potential social isolation, including support for building resilience and personal wellbeing.

GwE recognised that schools were at different stages in developing their support for distance learning and that their approach would vary according to their context and capacity. During this time, the consortium produced guidance to support effective distance learning and was proactive in helping schools produce their own distance learning models. This included exemplar models in order to share good practice across the region. Many of these were based on international research and gaining a deeper understanding of distance learning approaches and principles.

Between March and the end of May, GwE conducted an overview of the level of engagement of learners in distance learning. SIAs contacted all schools to gather feedback on the engagement of learners. Many of the SIAs had prior knowledge and information on the level of engagement and were able work collaboratively with schools. This work enabled the consortium to develop a regional overview of current practice, and to identify effective practice to inform and support regional guidance. The information helped to identify key barriers in learners' engagement and how the consortium could support schools in collaboration with local authorities and other partners. The report also identified the need to strengthen schools' tracking of the impact of engagement.

From June onwards, a key activity was to support the planning of pupils' transition back into school in a positive frame of mind, and to continue as seamlessly as possible with their learning. This included providing support to schools to ensure the health and wellbeing of learners returning to a very different classroom during the phased return and supporting teachers in the transition from consolidating previous learning to the teaching of new aspects. In addition, SIA supported schools with ideas about monitoring and giving constructive feedback on pupils' work.

GwE evaluated the capacity and ability of schools in their region to use the various learning platforms that are available. This provided the consortium with an understanding of which schools required additional support to develop their on-line distance learning resources and which members of staff required further training in using the technology. Overall, many schools within the GwE region noted that they saw value in the digital resources provided by the consortium during this period. A number of headteachers identified that their staff have become more confident in using technology and that its increased use had a positive impact on learning overall.

The continued support for professional learning was appreciated by many schools. For example, GwE provided support for teaching assistants (TAs) through the development of an online classroom, which included a suite of professional development opportunities. Schools were also positive about SIAs' support to subject areas in the secondary sector and their regular meetings with groups of subject teachers. The consortium has also invested in engaging its own staff in professional learning to develop their understanding of distance learning, including researching best practice national and internationally.

Local authorities within the region spoke of their open and positive relationship with GwE, whom they consider to have been at the forefront of developing the continuity of learning support and guidance for schools. Local authorities believe that at the end of June, when many pupils' returned to schools, and subsequently at the beginning of September, the consortium provided valuable support. For example, GwE provided support and guidance so that staff, pupils and parents could get used to new routines designed to keep everyone safe for re-opening schools.

At a national level, GwE worked closely with the other regional consortia to develop a collegiate response to these very challenging circumstances. GwE leaders and staff maintained regular discussions and collaboration with Welsh Government on delivering the Continuity for Learning Plan and have been involved in supporting most of the key deliverables. GwE was a key driver for developing and publishing a blended learning guidance and exemplar blended learning models in collaboration with Estyn and the other regional consortia.

### **Supporting vulnerable learners**

On 23rd March, schools were re-purposed to support pupils of key workers and some vulnerable learners. In response, GwE adapted their work in order to continue to provide services and support for schools within its region. Regional and local roles were identified in order to support vulnerable learners and GwE staff accessed further professional development and training to help them support school leadership in these areas.

During this period, GwE supported schools and local authorities with a focus on the safety and wellbeing of pupils and the workforce. A key driver for this work was to ensure support for the physical and mental wellbeing of pupils and young people, including preparing for them to return to school with motivation and enthusiasm to



learn. The consortium's SIAs ensured regular contact with the headteacher of their link schools, to check on their wellbeing and to ensure that they received appropriate support.

The regional consortium notes that at the time, the logistics of opening schools to all learners for the 'Check in, catch up' period were complicated. GwE's Management Board were committed to working in partnership across the region to adopt a consistent approach in developing a supportive framework to help schools during this period. As part of this, GwE's SIAs worked with local authority representatives to formulate a return to school plan. This aimed to support all schools in the region to ensure they had the right policies in place and a comprehensive risk assessment that they could tailor to the circumstances in their own school. GwE worked with the local authorities in the region to develop a common approach to risk assessment. This acted as a guide for school leaders to plan for reopening schools and PRUs for the 'Check in, catch up' period and for reopening fully in September. The risk assessment framework is presented as a dashboard and includes policies, documentation and checklists. This was regularly updated as Welsh Government guidance was issued. Local authorities' corporate health and safety officers quality assured and tested the procedures to address concerns and issues. School leaders note that they appreciate the consistent approach across their local authority area and region and in particular, the dashboard developed by GwE. In addition, they were positive about the helpful communication channels, including the headteacher fora.

The consortium worked in partnership with local authority officers such as the inclusion teams, human resource and transport to consider learners' needs and appropriate learning experiences, in particular, to support their health and wellbeing. GwE SIAs and local authorities continued to work closely with schools as they worked to adapt their settings to be as safe as possible for their learners.

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## **The regional consortium's work to support its schools and PRUs from September 2020**

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### **Leadership and collaboration**

In preparation for the full return of pupils to schools and PRUs in September, GwE revised its work plan, adapting its priorities to meet the needs of schools.

GwE continued to work closely with local authorities, schools and PRUs. Evidence from our engagement calls suggest that schools value the support and training given by regional SIA on teaching and learning, and in particular the guidance on blended and digital learning.

GwE has been a key driver in helping disseminate information and guidance to schools. For example, through its 'universal wellbeing and learner support

dashboard' a professional learning directory was developed and a range of guidance was shared with all schools across the region. This was communicated through the cluster approach and with officers within each local authority. At the beginning of the lockdown period, a minority of schools communicated that they had difficulties in getting to the right information promptly. This led to GwE making adaptations to the website and since September, most schools are complimentary about using the dashboard and the accessibility of other sources of information from GwE and their local authority. Overall, communication and access to information has improved considerably during this period.

The regional 'Return to School Group', with representatives of the six local authorities and GwE, has been a useful conduit to steer a co-ordinated approach to respond to COVID-19 challenges across the region.

### **Cameo: Regional 'Return to School Group'**

The aim of establishing the group was to develop a consistent, cohesive and collaborative regional approach to respond to COVID-19 challenges across all six local authorities. The group aimed to:

- provide all schools with timely and appropriate support
- ensure all learners were kept safe and well during this period
- promote a high quality learning offer (through distance and blended learning)
- ensure that clear communication channels are established to allow two-way flow of information across the region – with schools and the wider community
- listen to the voice of headteachers
- support the wellbeing of headteachers and staff of schools
- provide schools with a comprehensive framework to support the work in restarting schools, including support on risk assessments
- re-focus the work of GwE team members where needed to support local authority colleagues.

During this period the group:

- worked in partnership to offer schools a risk assessment matrix for primary, secondary, special and PRU settings
- developed a dashboard of resources with regional and national guidance to act as a 'one stop shop' for all schools to access
- collaboratively wrote COVID-19 amendments or appendices to existing policies for use by all schools across the region
- developed a communication strategy for the work of the group based on three pillars of 'inform, support, listen'
- co-ordinated contributions from regional sub-groups to provide consistent and timely messaging to schools on human resource guidance, transport, and learner support to include universal and targeted wellbeing support
- supported all schools with resources to develop blended learning as part of promoting high-quality learning provision for all learners across all schools

- supported all schools with resources to support the planning of accelerating learning

In our contact with schools and local authorities within the region, many appreciated the co-ordinated approach during this period. The facilitating and strengthening of collaboration and team-working at many levels between the local authorities and GwE has had a positive impact on schools across the north Wales region. Some schools have commented that they now have a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities around addressing issues with the pandemic and appreciate being able to work collaboratively across clusters to share, and have access to, expertise. A few headteachers noted that keeping learners and staff focused on reopening schools built confidence among school leaders, staff and families.

To ensure continuity for their learners, planning for different scenarios, on several levels has also been a key activity of local authority and GwE leaders since September. Leaders identified the need to support and prepare schools for possible future eventualities beyond their control. Through this, GwE and the local authorities encouraged schools to reflect on lessons learnt from the lockdown period and scenario plan for a potential further lockdown. Since the return in September, many schools have faced different challenges, for example with pupils at home self-isolating. The various scenarios included considering what learning could look like in different contexts, a fully open school, to one where all pupils are learning at home. This helped the consortium and schools consider the robustness of their distance and blended learning models.

GwE senior leaders are proactive in continuing to provide direction and vision to support leaders in schools. In particular, they are aware that headteachers, school leaders and education officers are presently working under difficult circumstances. All SIAs have continued their regular contact with the headteachers of their link schools, to check on their wellbeing and to ensure that they receive the assistance they need. To support this further, a series of workshops are available to school leaders and education officers with a focus on their wellbeing, such as on developing resilience, adapting to a changing environment and personal reflection. This continuing support of the workforce demonstrates a sound awareness by leaders in GwE and the local authorities of their likely wellbeing and development needs in the near future.

GwE provided advice and guidance to headteachers so that they could consider how to adjust their schools' strategic plans under the current circumstances. Although reviewing progress against the 2019-20 school development plans remains statutory, the consortium notes that most schools have taken a measured approach by reviewing their priorities up to March 2020. The consortium provided additional guidance to school leaders on the possible content of their school development plans to enable them to report on progress beyond March. This included possibilities for schools to consider the progress around their work on distance learning, staff professional learning and curriculum adjustments in line with what they needed to address during the pandemic.

## Promoting learning

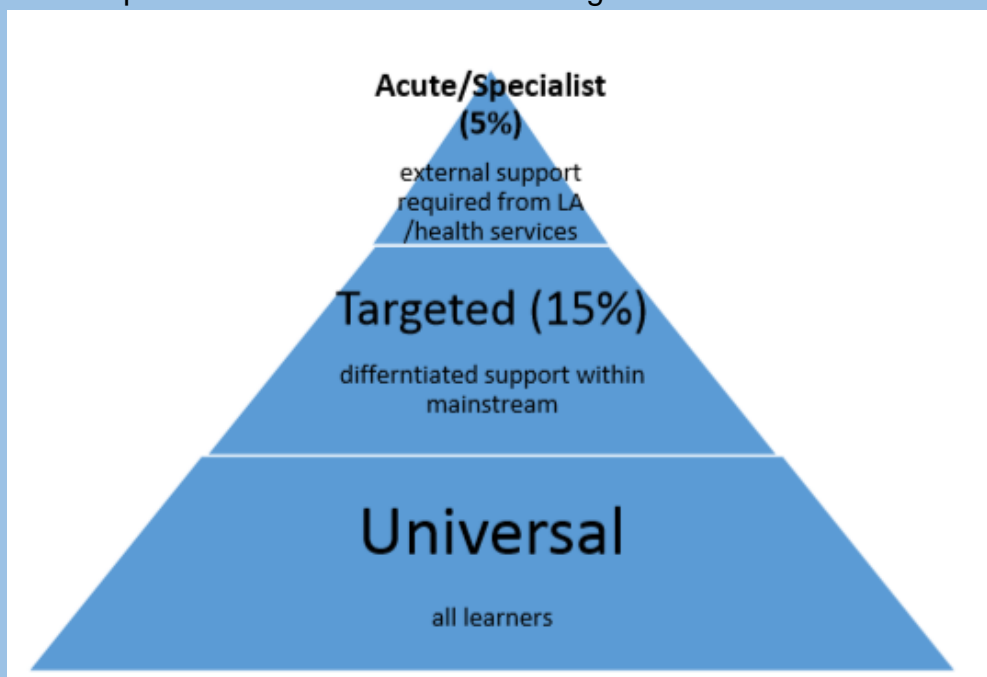
During the summer term and over the summer holidays, GwE and the local authorities worked with schools and PRUs to support their planning for the return to school in September.

### **Cameo: Re-starting learning model for North Wales**

GwE developed a regional model, with local authorities and schools, to ensure that the individual needs of learners could be met, with consideration to their local context. The model evaluated the school's preparedness and approach to ensure learning for all pupils continued. It focused on three inter-related components that assess pupils' fitness for learning. The three components are:

- emotional and mental wellbeing
- health and physical fitness
- core skills of numeracy and literacy, independence skills, and readiness for new learning.

The three components are divided into the categories of need:



Source: GwE regional consortium

Schools needed to ensure that they could offer provision for their learners against each area to ensure equity and equality. Responsibility for supporting schools to deliver each element was agreed between local authorities, GwE and other agencies to plan appropriate provision to meet all learners' needs.

The model aims to support schools to assist learners to return to 'learning fitness' and to develop learning which allows pupils to continue to make progress. Ensuring coherence for learners between in-school and distance learning is

another key element of the model including developing appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements were disapplied.

Many local authorities and schools praised GwE's role in co-ordinating partnership work between schools and PRUs, on a cluster level in primary schools and by geographic proximity in the secondary sector. This approach has meant that schools and PRUs are able to receive valuable curricular support from their SIA, whilst turning to local authority officers for operational support.

GwE is continuing to work with local authorities to support schools and PRUs to develop a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils. During our engagement calls, many schools felt that they have been well supported by GwE and their local authority during this period. Headteachers were consistent in their view that GwE has supported schools to deliver as broad a curriculum as possible, despite the constraints. Many primary schools have adapted their plans from September to include a greater emphasis on activities that promote learner wellbeing. In many schools, this meant adjusting the theme or topic that they had planned to cover during this term. Most schools have also placed a greater emphasis on increasing their focus on developing pupils' core skills. Nonetheless, a few lead primary SIAs note that there has generally been a narrowing of the curriculum. GwE has shared new models of delivery with primary headteachers to try to counteract this issue.

Headteachers in secondary schools report that in a few subjects, teachers are finding working within the COVID-19 period challenging, particularly in providing pupils with opportunities to complete practical work, for example in design and technology, science, art, music and physical education. Schools have generally adapted their provision to cope with these difficulties. In some secondary schools, leaders have adjusted their timetable to run more double lessons. This allows schools to respond to health and safety guidance while maintaining a balanced curriculum. In a few schools, departments have adapted their schemes of work to overcome practical difficulties such as not being able to use specialist rooms.

This term, SIAs and local authority education officers have continued to work together to add to the range of teaching and learning materials that are accessible to teachers and support staff through the GwE online platform. Headteachers report that these resources provide valuable support to their staff. GwE officers explained that many secondary schools have made use of resources and in particular, they have accessed multi-disciplinary units of work that fit in well with the principles of Curriculum for Wales. Many authorities relay that GwE has promoted co-operation and collaboration between schools and within schools on a departmental basis. This term, teachers within the region are sharing resources based on each area of learning and experience to address the need to support a wide and enriched curriculum model.

Many schools that Estyn have engaged with mentioned that during the initial return of their pupils in September, a significant number needed further support to catch-up with their literacy and numeracy skills. In particular, schools in the region noted that a continued focus on re-establishing pupils' Welsh literacy skills was a priority. To

address this, GwE co-ordinated opportunities for Welsh-medium schools to work across local authority areas to develop and share resources. For example, Welsh-medium secondary schools from Wrexham, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy have worked together to develop resources to support pupils' oracy skills. Over time, GwE and its schools have built a sound collection of resources available online for both schools and parents within the region. These include a series of Welsh language resources for schools teaching Welsh as a second language and bilingual resources for non-Welsh speaking parents. GwE has also raised awareness of additional materials available. For example, they have promoted 'Y Pair' as a network in Hwb established to share Welsh language resources adapted for distance and blended learning and 'Y Gist' as a network for Welsh as a second language teachers. Overall, as the autumn term has progressed, a few headteachers feel that Welsh language skills have recovered well, especially in the case of older pupils.

In our survey of school leaders, many noted that they receive useful information from GwE on approaches to distance and blended learning. Overall, these responses were more positive in the GwE region than in the other three consortia. Many schools and PRUs have found the information, resources and examples of practice for distance and blended learning produced by GwE useful as a starting point to develop their own practice. Information and professional learning has been shared through a range of fora and networks. These include cluster meetings, meetings for headteachers, subject specific fora and teaching and learning groups. GwE has offered webinars and surgery sessions to share resources and to develop teachers' understanding of effective online and distance teaching and learning. In addition, GwE has offered training for teaching assistants through an online platform. Many schools and PRUs have used the resources as a basis for their own package of professional learning to support teachers and teaching assistants' digital competency. Generally, school leaders note that staff have developed their digital skills and are better placed to offer a range of online learning experiences if pupils need to learn from home.

### **Cameo: An approach to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of distance learning**

Following cluster meetings with the regional school improvement service to discuss distance and blended learning, one school trialled using a digital distance learning approach while pupils were in class. One group of pupils completed activities and tasks online while the teacher used direct instruction with other pupils. This allowed teachers to support pupils to use software and upload work to a digital platform while they were in school. It also allowed the school to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and tasks set as distance learning. The school is adapting its approach following feedback from this process.

As expected, many learners required additional support to accelerate their learning when they returned to schools. As a result, GwE and its stakeholders recognised the need to identify effective teaching strategies to support schools and learners.

Through a review of research literature, together with research undertaken within schools in the region, GwE developed a guide to help schools identify the most effective teaching strategies and online programmes that could help schools improve pupils' core skills. In particular, GwE and the schools within the region focused on improving pupils' reading skills, including their comprehension, fluency and vocabulary skills along with improving their numeracy skills. Some of these strategies and support materials have been specifically designed to be used in schools and by parents at home to support, their child's learning. Many of the resources and strategies stem from recent collaborative research projects undertaken with GwE schools through the Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (CIEREI) which is a partnership between Bangor University and GwE.

In a few local authorities, senior leaders are keen for local authority and GwE officers to increase their role in monitoring and quality assurance so that officers gain a secure understanding of the quality of provision across their schools. Many schools have made use of pre-lockdown assessments to identify how pupils' skills have developed during home learning. SIAs have encouraged schools to consider a wide range of evidence from September in order to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Schools note that they have had helpful discussions with SIAs about making use of the lessons learnt in terms of pupil progress in recent months. For example, it seems that some pupils have made sound progress because they were provided with a broad range of open-ended activities, which gave beneficial opportunities for them to make their own choices.

The 'normal' professional learning offer has been modified to ensure that schools and settings receive relevant and purposeful support. This has enabled them to adapt to the challenging circumstances. In our engagement with schools, most headteachers have praised the content of the professional learning offered by GwE during this period. For example, they have provided training through webinars on specific accelerated learning methods based on research at the University of Bangor. Another example is how the middle leadership programme has been tailored to address how to lead at times of crisis and change. The professional learning offer prioritised supporting schools to improve the digital skills of their staff and enabling them to develop effective distance and blended learning approaches and more effective learner engagement.

The regional consortium offer a wide range of opportunities for schools to participate in specific professional learning opportunities to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and accelerated learning strategies. This includes, the extensive SAFMEDS (Say All Fast Minute Every Day Shuffled) project to improve pupils basic mathematics fluency skills using an evidence-based teaching strategy. Other support programme for schools include a comprehensive range of training materials and resources such as a bilingual literacy toolkit, to support the literacy skills development of pupils. GwE has been training members of staff who then relay that training to others in schools and PRUs. Leaders and school staff benefit from training through webinars, networks of subject leaders, and meetings between teaching and learning leaders.

Resources for promoting literacy and numeracy have been shared through each co-ordinator. GwE is facilitating work between schools to share good practice and ideas on teaching and learning through the current pandemic. There is also support for schools to reflect on the quality of provision during the lockdown period and to use this information as they prepare for the delivery of Curriculum for Wales. Headteachers note that these resources give them a firm foundation to observe models of effective practice.

Many of the region's local authorities believe that schools and the regional consortium have changed their way of working, in many ways for the better. In particular, these local authorities are positive about the developments in ICT and acknowledge that improving ICT capacity has been a steep learning curve for everyone. They also see that more extensive professional learning opportunities are available through using a range of digital platforms. Many schools and local authorities report that staff are more likely to engage in optional professional learning activities when they can access it remotely and at a time that suits them.

### **Supporting vulnerable learners**

GwE SIA, in collaboration with local authority officers, have given purposeful support to headteachers and school staff to promote wellbeing and, at a suitable time, begin to consider provision and learning. Headteachers identified that SIAs have provided an effective balance between support for learner wellbeing and guidance on learning during this term. They say that schools are feeling immense strain in getting the balance right between school improvement and prioritising staff and learner wellbeing.

The region's SIA with responsibility for vulnerable groups has provided purposeful resources for schools and parents and these are available on each of the local authorities' SEN and Inclusion websites. This SIA attends half-termly meetings with the education officers of each local authority and representatives from children's services in order to gather important information on aspects of learning needing further support. This has resulted in a more targeted approach to support.

GwE officers have collaborated with schools and local authorities in a range of fora. For example, officers contributed to the work of the regional ALN/Inclusion Group and produced content for the online dashboard. They also facilitated a regional shared drive of information and resources between all six of the local authorities. GwE SIAs continue to attend local authority wellbeing and safeguarding groups to share practice and information, and also the regional quality group to collaborate with the work of supporting children who are looked after.

During our engagement calls with schools, headteachers were positive about the support and advice provided by GwE to help them plan how to use the 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: the accelerating learning programme (RRRS)' grant. Local authorities are responsible for monitoring the expenditure, compliance and ensuring that plans are sustainable, whereas consortium officers generally take the lead on advising schools about appropriate and effective provision.



GwE leaders have communicated that headteachers are best placed to prioritise how this additional grant funding should be spent. Support and advice is available to schools but SIAs and local authorities are keen to provide autonomy for schools to develop their own ideas about exactly how to target the grant. GwE provided a pro-forma for schools and received their plans, which were then agreed with the local authority. GwE has created a helpful dashboard and a bank of documentation and resources on their website linked to the RRRS grant so that schools can access information quickly to get ideas on grant spending, such as support for running small intervention groups. GwE are also aware of the need to support and advise some schools more closely, to ensure that the funding is used to maximum impact.

GwE are working alongside their local authority colleagues as they develop a single method of monitoring RRRS expenditure across the six north Wales authorities. In addition, it is expected that schools should show that their plans are sustainable. Some small schools told us that they have had difficulty in recruiting staff, as the grant funding will only sustain provision for a limited number of additional hours. According to SIAs, most of the smaller schools are using the grant to top up the hours of employment of existing members of staff, and providing them with training so that they will continue to benefit from the expertise when the funding ends.

Nationally, GwE officers have contributed to the work of various working groups with a focus on wellbeing and vulnerable learners. For example, a SIA with responsibility for wellbeing contributed to the national PDG Group with Welsh Government to ensure regular communication, to update on regional developments and share information back within the consortium.

GwE has supported local authorities and schools to respond to the wellbeing needs of vulnerable pupils, especially in providing complimentary professional learning for staff. The consortium has worked in collaboration with individual schools, clusters of schools and local authorities to support a universal and targeted approach to learner and staff wellbeing. It has structured this professional learning offer to support the learning in the schools. With the wellbeing of the learner central to the offer, schools can benefit from the resources and strategies in the universal offer which is available to all schools or opt for a targeted offer. To date, many schools have trialled, shared and benefitted from observing examples of effective practice from schools in their local authority and across the region. The practical intervention resources for schools to utilise, underpinned by the 'Five principles to support home learning' [EEF, 2020], are a focus of SIAs conversations with schools as they plan and deliver their accelerated learning programmes.

A good example of a professional learning offer is the 'Return to school trauma-informed schools programme'. Through this programme, whole school sessions are facilitated about the impact of the pandemic and analysis of strategies that schools could consider using as their learners returned. This included key teaching and learning principles and models. A number of schools commented on this programme and noted that it was helpful to increase the number of staff who are trauma-informed and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) aware. These schools

also mentioned that teaching staff became more confident in assisting learners and identifying suitable support and provision.



## EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday, 28 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<b>Report Subject</b>	School Modernisation Update
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Education
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite significant challenges brought about by the pandemic, the School Modernisation Team have made significant progress in the School Modernisation Programme since the last report to Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Programme has been maintained and delivered in anticipated timelines by adapting working methods and by the use of technology.

The report informs the Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee of progress of the School Modernisation Programme across a wide number of projects.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of the report and progress of the School Modernisation programme.
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### REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>BACKGROUND AND CONSIDERATIONS</b>
1.01	<p><u>Lixwm Primary School</u></p> <p>In March 2020, post consultation, Cabinet agreed with the proposal to change the designation of Lixwm Primary School from a County Primary</p>

	(CP) to a Voluntary Aided (VA) school. The change in designation came into effect 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2020.
1.02	This change in designation provides a platform for the governors of Lixwm VA school to pursue their ambition to seek a federation with a local school of the same designation.
1.03	Subsequently, the Governing Bodies of Ysgol yr Esgob VA, Caerwys, and Lixwm VA Primary School agreed to undertake a consultation on a proposal to establish a federation between the two schools.
1.04	The consultation, with which the Council assisted, was progressed in accordance with the Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations (2014). Consultation commenced 16 November 2020 and closed 18 December 2020. As with all consultations of this nature, a version of the consultation document was produced for children and young people who are likely to be affected by the proposal.
1.05	The schools received a modest number of responses to the consultation all of which were positive. The next step in the process is that the governing bodies are required to meet to consider the responses and independently determine to be determined.
1.06	Should the governors of Ysgol yr Esgob VA, Caerwys, and Lixwm VA Primary School decide to proceed then the schools will be formally federated on 7 June 2021, following the statutory cooling off period.
1.07	<p><b><u>Childcare programme</u></b></p> <p>The Welsh Government made capital grants available to councils for the purpose of childcare provision across Wales.</p> <p>The objectives of the programme is to provide 30 hours of government-funded early education and childcare for up to 48 weeks of the year to all three and four year olds of eligible working parents. The 30 hours will be made up of the existing minimum 10 hours of Foundation Phase Early Education (Early Entitlement) and up to 20 hours of childcare with a registered provider.</p> <p>A key policy driver for the Welsh Government is that the 30 hours offer is as clear and easy as possible for working parents to understand and children to access. Feedback from parents is that ideally, they want to be able to drop their children off and pick them up from the same site and access a seamless package of childcare, although wrap around provision between schools and non-maintained providers will continue to be an important part of the answer for some children and parents.</p> <p>The primary purpose of the capital programme is, therefore, to facilitate and support the co-location of the Foundation Phase and childcare provision wherever possible. This is in line with our Prosperity for All commitment to “introduce a new model of Community Learning Centres, providing extended services with childcare, parenting support, family learning and community access to facilities built around the school day”.</p>

1.08	<p>Social Services lead on the Childcare Strategy and the production of a comprehensive Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) that looks at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) the supply of childcare in Flintshire including: type, quantity of provisions, location, costs, places available, choice; and</li> <li>ii) the gaps in childcare including: location choice, barriers to take up provision, places unavailable.</li> </ul> <p>The CSA was the basis of the successful bid to Welsh Government for early years' capital.</p>
1.09	<p>The Council made a strategic decision at the outset to package up the projects within the Childcare programme for purposes of efficiency, for effective programme management, use of resources, best value (economies of scale) and procurement. To support this approach the Client/operational role for the delivery of the Childcare Grant schemes was transferred from Social Services to the School Modernisation Team within Education and Youth. The Chief Officer for Education and Youth assumed the role of Senior Responsible Officer for the programme in June 2020. The construction programme is being managed through the School Modernisation team.</p>
1.10	<p>The programme also includes different capital funding packages to maximise investment in a number of school sites and is formed from the following funding streams: WG Childcare Grant, WG Welsh Medium Grant, 21st Century schools, Flying Start and Flintshire County Council's own Capital funding.</p>
1.11	<p>Wynne Construction have been commissioned by the Council through a tender process as the constructor for the programme on a two stage design &amp; build contract. The programme also includes a Flying Start project at Aston Family Centre and the Council funded capital project at Ysgol Brynford and the proposed project at Ysgol Croes Atti, Glannau Dyfrdwy.</p>
1.12	<p>Subject to Cabinet approval, the following projects within the programme will form the construction project with Wynne Construction:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ysgol Bro Carmel, Carmel</li> <li>• Ysgol Derwen, Kinnerton,</li> <li>• Westwood CP School, Buckley</li> <li>• Ysgol Yr Esgob, Caerwys.</li> <li>• Ysgol Maes Y Felin, Holywell,</li> <li>• Ysgol Sychdyn</li> <li>• Aston Family Centre (WG, Flying Start Grant)</li> <li>• Ysgol Y Llan, Whitford</li> <li>• Ysgol Glan Aber, Bagillt.</li> <li>• Ysgol Croes Atti, Glannau Dyfrdwy (WG 21st Century/Childcare)</li> <li>• Ysgol Merllyn, Bagillt</li> <li>• Ysgol Brynford (Council's Capital Programme)</li> </ul> <p>The construction contract will start as soon as it is feasible in early 2021.</p>

1.13	<p><b><u>Ysgol Croes Atti, Glannau Dyfrdwy site</u></b></p> <p>Proposed project funding through the Welsh Government Childcare Grant and Welsh Government 21<sup>st</sup> Century school investment programme (as stated in para 1.11) forms part of an extended package which will see an investment of circa £1.1m in the Glannau Dyfrdwy site, improving provision for Welsh medium education in the Shotton area - an important strand of the Council's Welsh in Education Strategy.</p>
1.14	<p><b><u>Ysgol Glanrafon, Mold</u></b></p> <p>The project at Ysgol Glanrafon is funded primarily via external Welsh Government funding through the Childcare and Welsh Medium Grants with the balance secured through the Council's Repair and Maintenance allocations, S106 contributions and a small amount of Salix finance through the Council's energy team to support energy efficiency measures.</p>
1.15	<p>The Council have commissioned Wynne construction on a two stage Design and Build contract, tendered through the North Wales Construction Partnership.</p>
1.16	<p>Construction in the £4.2m project commenced on site November 2020 with the anticipated completion being February 2022.</p>
1.17	<p><b><u>Ysgol Brynford</u></b></p> <p>This is a council funded project, however, from a contractual perspective is included in the extended construction package for the Childcare programme. This proposed project will see an investment of £1.090m in the Ysgol Brynford site.</p>
1.18	<p><b><u>Welsh Government Infants Class Size Grant</u></b></p> <p>The £2.7m project, (part funded by the Council) at Ysgol Glan Aber, Bagillt was completed as planned in March 2020.</p>
1.19	<p><b><u>Ysgol Castell Alun, Hope</u></b></p> <p>The £7.6m project will construct a new build three storey Art and Design Technology (DT) &amp; classroom block, relocated next to the sports hall which enables the removal of mobile classrooms, the demolition of the current DT block and the creation of a new car park.</p> <p>Willmott Dixon Construction mobilised in October 2020 and the anticipated project completion is November 2021.</p>
1.20	<p><b><u>21st Century schools Investment Programme - Band B</u></b></p> <p><b>Connah's Quay (Phase 2)</b> – Keir Construction (NW) completed phase 2 in November 2019 and this completed the Council's investment of circa £11m (across investment bands A and B) on this site.</p>

1.21	<p><b><u>Queensferry Campus Project</u></b></p> <p>The project will provide a new Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), which will bring virtually all elements of the current provision onto one site and to address the significant issues around the variety of accommodation currently in use for Plas Derwen. The project also includes investment in Queensferry CP School to address a number of suitability issues and the final legacy issues associated with the facilities shared with the former John Summers High School. Following the successful bid for an additional stream of Welsh Government funding for communities, the project also now includes provision for a new community hub.</p> <p>This significant investment will complement the Adult Day Care centre, Hwb Cyfle, and provides a final masterplan solution for the site.</p>
1.22	<p>In late 2018, Welsh Government announced £12 million was being made available across Wales under the banner of a Community Learning Grant. The Council registered an expression of interest and were successful in gaining £2.5m grant from Welsh Government.</p>
1.23	<p>The Community Hub forms part of Council's construction contract for the Queensferry Campus. However, the building will be legally transferred on completion to the constituted community group who will operate the building/external areas under its demise and deliver its activities, which will focus on adult community learning. There are no capital or revenue pressures on the Council as a result of this element of the project.</p>
1.24	<p>In forming the constituted community group, Shotton Rugby Club as an integral member, have secured additional funding through the Welsh Rugby Union to upgrade sports facilities on the site. Additionally, colleagues in Social Services have secured WG Flying Start Funding. The Queensferry Campus project is a positive example of multi-agency and community engagement and successful collaboration.</p>
1.25	<p>Kier Construction (NW) started on site in November 2020. It is anticipated that the full project will be completed by February 2022 with anticipated handover of the following elements as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plas Derwen – September 2021</li> <li>• Ty Calon/Community Hub - September 2021</li> <li>• Queensferry CP – October 2021</li> </ul>
1.26	<p><b><u>Proposed 3-16 Campus – Mynydd Isa</u></b></p> <p>In March 2020, Cabinet agreed to amend the Council's nominated Mutual Investment Model (MIM) project to the proposed project for the Mynydd Isa area and provided a mandate to officers to engage with Welsh Government's Strategic Partner for MIM, when they became available in Autumn 2020.</p>
1.27	<p>In July 2020, Cabinet agreed the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reiterate its previous commitment to the Ysgol Mynydd Isa 3-16 project as a Welsh Government MIM Pathfinder.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved the execution, delivery and performance of the Strategic Partnering Agreement with the Welsh Education Partnership Co in autumn 2020 to facilitate the delivery of a range of infrastructure services and the delivery of the proposed 3-16 campus at Mynydd Isa.</li> <li>• Approved the appointment of Chief Officer, Neal Cockerton as 'Participant Representative' to sit on the national Strategic Partnering Board (SPB).</li> </ul>
1.28	Welsh Government have procured a private sector partner (the WEPCo) to work with it on the delivery of education and community facilities in Wales under the MIM 21st Century Schools Programme. It will be the only means of delivering revenue funded Band B projects. The Welsh Government appointed a preferred bidder in September 2020 as planned.
1.29	Subsequently, the Council have submitted a New Project Request (NPR) to the WEPCo for the proposed 3-16 campus at Mynydd Isa. The proposed project at Mynydd Isa is notable as the first MIM project in Wales.
1.30	The NPR has been accepted by WEPCo and currently the Council, Argoed High School and Mynydd Isa Primary School and education officers are engaged in client engagement meetings with the WEPCo team.
1.31	Subject to successful navigation through Council, WG business case and MIM processes, the anticipated timelines are as follows:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client Engagement – approximately 12 months – Client Engagement (Design development Cost certainty, WG business case process).</li> <li>• Construction Phase - circa 18 - 24 months to be determined through the client engagement process (above).</li> </ul>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	Decisions to commit to capital expenditure investing in assets to deliver high quality services efficiently have long term implications for future revenue budgets. Consideration must be given to schemes to ensure that they are affordable, sustainable and therefore prudent.
2.02	The estimated capital and associated debt revenue costs arising from the schemes within this report are set out on a scheme by scheme basis.
2.03	The estimated associated debt revenue costs arising from the project are included in the Council Medium Term Financial strategy.
2.04	The following Welsh Government Grants are fully funded (100%); Childcare, Welsh Medium, Flying Start and Community Learning
2.05	The Welsh Government 21 <sup>st</sup> Century schools programme is funded as follows:-



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital – Schools : 65% WG / 35% LA</li> <li>• Capital – PRU / ALN Schools : 75% WG / 25% LA</li> <li>• MIM is funded at an intervention rate of 81% Welsh Government and 19% Council (through revenue budgets of both organisations).</li> </ul>
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<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	All projects are managed using a risk register. Risks are managed accordingly, and financial risks are managed through a project contingency. Any high level risk which cannot be managed with the projects/programme will be incorporated into the risk register for the Education and Youth Portfolio.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	Reports on the SOP for 21st Century school have previously been to Education & Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
4.02	Some projects within the programme will require statutory proposals. These will be carried out subject to Cabinet mandate and based on WG's School Organisation Code legal framework. Determination on statutory proposals are the responsibility of Cabinet.
4.03	For projects that have been delivered, planning permission approval has been given. For projects not yet delivered, consultation will be required through the planning application process at the appropriate stage of development.
4.04	Meetings and conversations have taken place with Childcare Providers to provide information and guidance on the development of business cases which have formed an integral part of assessing the sustainability of proposals.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	N/A

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	N/A

<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Damian Hughes, Senior Manager, School Planning and Provision</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704135</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:Damian.hughes@flintshire.gov.uk">Damian.hughes@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
8.01	<p><b>21st Century Schools</b> - Is a collaboration between the Welsh Government (WG), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and local authorities. It is a major, long-term and strategic capital investment programme with the aim of creating a generation of 21st century schools in Wales.</p> <p><b>MIM</b> - The Mutual Investment Model is the Welsh Government's new form of Public Private Partnership.</p> <p><b>Capital funding</b> - Capital funding is usually linked to acquiring or improving a long-term asset such as equipment or buildings.</p> <p><b>Revenue funding</b> - Is linked to items that will be used within a year. Examples include salaries, heating, lighting, services and small items of equipment.</p> <p><b>Childcare Sufficiency Assessments:</b> A report that brings together a range of different data and information to develop a picture of the current childcare market and to identify whether there are any gaps in supply.</p> <p><b>The Childcare Offer:</b> 30 hours of funded childcare and education for 3 and 4 year olds, in working families for up to 48 weeks a year.</p> <p><b>WEPCo</b> – A private Sector Partner and subsidiary of the Development Bank of Wales (known as Welsh Government co) will be required to form WEPco, which will deliver infrastructure services to Participant (i.e. the Council) in Wales.</p>



## EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday, 28 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<b>Report Subject</b>	Schools Covid Lessons Learned & Risk Assessments
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since March 2020, teachers in Flintshire, like the rest of the United Kingdom have had to adapt quickly to a variety of changes in education; from the closure of schools and the delivery of remote learning, to teaching while following strict health and safety guidelines to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

At all times, schools in Flintshire have worked within the Covid-19 guidance provided by the Welsh Government. The core of this guidance stresses the importance of a robust risk assessment process and an appropriate hierarchy of Covid-19 controls to manage and mitigate the risk of infection.

Schools have regularly reviewed their risk assessments since education restarted in September to respond to the ever changing situation and to any revised guidance. The Corporate Health and Safety Team within the Council have provided expert support and reviewed every school's risk assessment twice, providing clear feedback and recommendations for improvement where necessary. The Council's approach to school based risk assessments has also been independently reviewed by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who provided very positive feedback.

Following the review of school risk assessments at the end of the autumn term, the Health and Safety Team have produced a report which summarises the key lessons learned. This has been shared with all schools to ensure continuous improvement of the risk assessment process. There has also been input into this report from the Test, Trace and Protect Team (TTP) who undertake the detailed follow up when a positive case is identified and input from the Environmental Health Team who provide the expert advice to schools on the management of communicable diseases.

The overall outcome of this report is that schools are managing the health and safety of their schools very well and that risk assessment processes and Covid-19

controls are robust and effective. This is reassuring for the Council, for parents and for pupils. The current arrangements also remain the best approach to managing the new variant of coronavirus which is prevalent in Flintshire.

However, there are still concerns, that despite regular messaging from schools, the Council and the national governments, some individuals are still not complying with the requirements set out by the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales to minimise the spread of the virus.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That members receive the report and welcome the assurance provided that schools have robust risk assessments in place and effective control measures to maintain safe school environments.
2	That members acknowledge the work of the Corporate Health and Safety Team in supporting schools in the pandemic and note the lessons learned to date.

## REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE COVID-19 LESSONS LEARNED AND RISK ASSESSMENTS IN SCHOOLS</b>
1.01	From the beginning of the lockdown period in March 2020 and the subsequent reopening of schools for the provision of education, schools have been involved in developing robust risk assessments based on national guidance to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and the wider school community in light of the coronavirus pandemic.
1.02	Working in partnership with the regional school improvement service GwE, officers of the Education Portfolio and the Corporate Health and Safety Team, contributed to the development of a comprehensive risk assessment model and toolkit which was shared with all schools across the North Wales region. This was well received by Headteachers and successfully adopted by all Flintshire schools.
1.03	<p>The detailed risk assessment covered every aspect of school life, identifying the areas of risk in terms of the physical school environment, daily school operations, delivering teaching and learning, managing pupils, parents and other visitors to the site, transport, catering, cleaning etc.</p> <p>On the basis of the risks identified, appropriate controls were established in line with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance e.g. one way systems, learners grouped in bubbles, increased resources for handwashing and sanitizing, dedicated rooms/outdoor areas for particular groups, enhanced cleaning regimes, use of face coverings (where advised), enforcement of social distancing etc.</p>

1.04	No school in Flintshire was permitted to open in September until their risk assessment had been quality assured by the Health and Safety Team and where necessary, any recommendations to strengthen controls were made.
1.05	<p>Head teachers / Governing Bodies are responsible for monitoring the advice and guidance available, ensuring risk assessments and safe working practices are updated where applicable and cascaded through to employees. They have to ensure that compliance is monitored and any emerging issues addressed appropriately.</p> <p>Regular updates have been issued to schools where risk assessments could be affected by changes to current national guidance or corporate policies and procedures. All schools have been instructed to ensure that employees receive site specific information on the controls implemented within their workplaces.</p> <p>Risk assessments were developed in conjunction with staff and union representatives and this joint ownership encourages their effective implementation by all.</p>
1.06	Once schools had been operational for the first half term, a second review of risk assessments and controls was undertaken by the Health and Safety Team to provide ongoing reassurance that the assessments and controls were still robust.
1.07	<p>The outcome of that review, completed by the end of the autumn term, was that there continued to be effective management of risk assessments and the hierarchy of controls within schools and that they had responded well to new guidance that had emerged over the term e.g. ventilation.</p> <p>All schools received written feedback on their documentation and no school in Flintshire required any major intervention to address any potential weaknesses in their approach.</p>
1.08	In addition to the scrutiny from the corporate team, the national Health and Safety Executive (HSE) also undertook a review of Covid-19 risk assessments and safe working practices in each local authority in Wales. This involved meetings with key officers, reviews of documentation and a small number of visits to school sites. Feedback from the HSE inspector was positive in relation to the approach taken in Flintshire and no significant health and safety concerns were raised.
1.09	<p>Despite schools' best efforts, there were significant numbers of cases of Covid-19 identified in the pupil population and in the schools workforce in the autumn term that resulted in the school having to take appropriate action to isolate bubbles and implement their infection control protocols.</p> <p>Cases of 'within school' transmission of the virus remained relatively low because of schools' safe working practices. The effective tracing of each case by the Test, Trace and Protect Team (TTP) and review by Environment Health Officers (EHO), confirmed that most of the cases identified had been contracted within families or within the community.</p>

	<p>Where clusters of cases were identified in particular schools, the Corporate Health and Safety Team conducted several joint visits to schools with members from the Council's Environmental Health Team to review the school's arrangements. No significant safety concerns were raised as a result of these visits.</p> <p>In addition, Corporate Health and Safety colleagues accompanied Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on visits to a number of Flintshire schools and, again, no significant health and safety concerns were identified. Schools' arrangements were confirmed to be robust.</p>
1.10	<p>Through the Test, Trace and Protect process information is gathered from people who have tested positive for coronavirus about their movements, their attendance at work, college or school and who they have had contact with.</p> <p>With the increasing trend of positive cases in Flintshire through December and early January and information gathered by TTP, it became apparent that despite very high levels of public messaging, there appeared to be concerning trends of public behaviour and misconceptions about the current health protection guidance e.g. not staying in self-isolation when confirmed as a positive test or waiting for a test result; children mixing outside of school time e.g. sleep overs, parties, playdates etc.; informal childcare outside of the permitted bubble arrangements; and car shares.</p> <p>As a result the Council has reinforced the health guidance messages and schools have received specific communications to use in their regular newsletters to parents to remind them of the regulations.</p>
1.11	<p>As part of the risk assessment review process, the Corporate Health and Safety Team also captured comments from schools about their experiences of managing their risk assessments and if there were important lessons they had learned that they felt would be of value to share with others. These are included in the report attached at Appendix 1.</p>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	<p>There are no revenue or capital implications as a result of this report.</p> <p>The main resource implication was the amount of time spent by a small team of officers to support the development and implementation of a robust risk assessment and control management process. However, the report outlines that this was time well spent as it secured positive outcomes. This investment of time and expertise was highly valued by schools.</p>

<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	The ability of schools to open and operate safely is referenced in the Risk Register for the Education and Youth Portfolio (EY33) and is regularly reviewed and reported to this committee.
<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	N/A
<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Lessons Learned in schools during Covid-19
<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	WG Schools Operating Guidance for the Autumn Term <a href="https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19">https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19</a>
<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<b>Contact Officer:</b> Anthony Smith Corporate Health and Safety Advisor <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702782 <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:anthony.smith@flintshire.gov.uk">anthony.smith@flintshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
8.01	<b>GwE</b> – Regional School Improvement Service  <b>TTP</b> – Test, Trace and Protect : Welsh Government strategy for collecting and managing personal individual data in relation to the management of the Covid-19 virus  <b>HSE</b> – Health and Safety Executive : the UK national regulator for workplace health and safety  <b>EHO</b> - Environmental Health Officer – employed by the council to administer and enforce measures to protect public health including the prevention of the spread of disease  <b>Hierarchy of Control</b> – a system to eliminate or reduce exposure to risk in the workplace and schools

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## INTRODUCTION

Since March 2020, teachers around the UK have had to adapt quickly to a variety of changes in education; from the closure of schools and remote learning, to teaching while following social distancing guidelines.

Measuring (e.g. making sure your plan has been implemented and assessing how well the risks are being controlled) and Reviewing Performance (e.g. monitoring before events and investigating after events, acting on lessons learnt, etc.) are two key components of any good health and management system.

By using the information gained from (i) feedback from Inspectors of the Health & Safety Executive who have been conducting inspections in our schools, (ii) the contact tracing information / case analysis undertaken of COVID outbreaks by our TTP Teams, and (iii) the school risk assessment review process, we have managed to get an insight into the ways that schools have been adapting, the problems that have been encountered, and the lessons they have learnt that they believe should be held onto in the future.

## WHAT LESSONS HAVE WE LEARNT FROM THE LAST 9 MONTHS?

The key recommendations/ lessons learnt from the above monitoring and review processes are summarised in the three sub-sections below. Head teachers are advised to pay close attention to these when schools reopen in the New Year and any areas identified where there may be scope for improvement should be actioned immediately.

### 1. FEEDBACK FROM THE HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE

#### MAXIMISING THE LEVELS OF VENTILATION

In November 2020 Public Health Wales updated its guidance to note the possibility of airborne transmission particularly in poorly ventilated indoor spaces. The Centers for Disease Control in the US recognise that transmission appears to have occurred when there is inadequate ventilation"....."Evidence continues to suggest that in poorly ventilated indoor spaces airborne aerosols are a possible transmission route and the precautionary advice remains valid. Maintaining good levels of ventilation remains the key focus even in colder weather conditions, whilst minimising occupant discomfort due to draughts and lower indoor temperatures."

**RECOMMENDED ACTION** - Undertake a review of your arrangements for providing ventilation to internal areas of the school, referring to the guidance sent under cover of the corporate email communication sent out jointly by Corporate Health and Safety / Property Maintenance dated 19.11.2020.

## FIRE DRILLS

According to NWF&RS, the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order (RRFSO) 2005, under which schools are expected to carry out fire evacuation drills, is still in force and enforceable despite Covid-19. Fire drills are an important part of any successful emergency evacuation procedure and can assist in a safe evacuation in event of fire, it is imperative everyone understands what to do in event of fire.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION** - You need to assess the current situation considering the familiarity of your occupants and the last fire drill. If required and depending on your premises, you can familiarise new occupants with the premises and may be able to carry this out via a desktop drill, this is important when staff have been working at a different site previously. It is also extremely important to take into consideration the need for Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and how these will be managed and supported as part of your overall Emergency Evacuation Procedures and fire risk assessment.

In conclusion, the NWF&RS has confirmed that despite Covid-19 it is a legal requirement that evacuation drills must be fulfilled. Documentary evidence in the fire safety register will be required.

## FIRE RISKS OF ALCOHOL BASED SANITISERS

When stored properly and used as directed, the likelihood of experiencing a fire associated with hand sanitiser is minimal. However, as with any flammable liquid, it is necessary to exercise caution. ... To avoid a fire hazard, never use alcohol-based sanitiser near a heat source or open flame.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION** – Ensure that relevant employees (especially those working next to naked flames or in any other environments that pose static-charge risk e.g. Kitchens, Science laboratories, Home economics, D&T workshops, etc.) never use alcohol-based sanitiser near a heat source or open flame. Whenever an employee applies alcoholic sanitiser, they must wait until the liquid has fully evaporated on their skin (i.e. their hands are completely dry) before they begin or resume work.

## BUILDINGS/ PREMISES INSPECTIONS, SAFETY TOURS

Monitoring performance is an essential part of effective health and safety management. It involves checking that arrangements and systems are working as they should, for example

- physical controls are in place and working;
- staff have done what they are supposed to do;
- procedures are working and regularly reviewed.

Governing bodies, whether they are the employer or not, must satisfy themselves that monitoring arrangements are in place for COVID, and that the results are reported back to them. One of the ways of doing this is for the governor taking the lead on health and safety to get actively involved in conducting periodic safety inspections of the school premises.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION** – Encourage Governors to get actively involved in conducting periodic inspections of the school buildings and premises. Please be reminded that a checklist has been developed to help schools monitor health and safety standards in their establishment and identify areas to address. A copy of this checklist can be downloaded from the health and safety section of the HWB website. It is recommended that the checklist is completed annually, but it can be divided into smaller sections and completed over several weeks/months. We recommend that schools evidence that formal recorded inspections are carried out on at least a termly basis.

## PROVISION OF INSTRUCTION, INFORMATION AND TRAINING IN THE SAFE USE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Whilst it is important to remember that social/physical; distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene remain strongly evidenced to be the most effective ways to prevent the spread of coronavirus, it is recognized that there are also potential benefits of wearing PPE (including face coverings) in certain situations within educational settings.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION** – Schools and settings should reinforce to everyone the rules around the circumstances / activities when PPE should be worn in the school. All staff and learners should be reminded how to put on or remove PPE in the right order, the importance of washing PPE (if reusable), disposing of waste, and use of correct hand hygiene steps to reduce the risk of onward transmission of infection. It is particularly important that items of PPE (e.g. Emergency PPE Packs) are stored separately from each other (e.g. in sealed bags or containers) to reduce the risk of them becoming contaminated before use.

## 2. FEEDBACK FROM THE TTP PROCESS

### COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS/CARERS

OVER the past few months a number of Flintshire schools have been affected by pupils who have been forced to self-isolate, due to positive cases in their school 'bubbles'.

The vast majority of families have complied with the requirements set out by Public Health Wales and the Welsh Government.

However, with children and staff returning to schools after the extended Christmas break at a time when a new variant of the COVID-19 virus is known to be in circulation, it is really important to remind ourselves of why we still need to adhere to these rules.

Over recent weeks there has been a steady increase in the numbers of people testing positive to COVID-19 in the county and, during this time, our colleagues in schools and the TTP Team have picked up on some 'concerning trends and misconceptions', which goes against the current health protection guidance.

Some of the main areas of concern are listed below:

- Lack of adherence to self-isolation rules, when confirmed as a positive case or awaiting test results
- Adults with symptoms and whilst waiting for their test result to come through taking and picking up their children from school
- Childcare being provided by adults who are contacts of positive cases and should be self-isolating.
- Particularly for older pupils, not understanding how a bubble and the need to self-isolate works. For instance, carrying on with part time jobs, socialising with the bubble contacts.
- Children mixing outside school time – sleepovers, birthday parties, play dates, park mixing, family parties. School bubbles only relates to the school – not outside. Also:
- Shared childcare out of school time – unregistered childminders taking children back with their children from school, also grandparents, aunties and uncles.
- Lift sharing (both school staff and parents taking other people’s children to school) – this has caught several schools out.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION** - Ensure a reminder goes out to all parents, carers and pupils to adhere to national guidance and local school rules. Reinforce the message that we all need to work together to keep Flintshire safe and avoid meeting people from outside our household, wear face coverings and follow the rules that are in place to keep us all safe.

### 3. FEEDBACK FROM THE RISK ASSESSMENT REVIEW PROCESS

A review of the forms submitted as part of the school risk assessment review process has revealed that there is no ‘one size fits all’ off-the-shelf suite of control measures to suit every school or circumstance. The control measures adopted by our schools are based upon the principles of,

- Avoiding contact with those who have symptoms.
- Frequent hand cleaning & good respiratory hygiene practices.
- Regular cleaning of settings.
- Minimising contact & mixing (with a strong focus on group/class separation).
- Communication with all stakeholders and awareness and understanding of guidance, risks and control measures.

All of our schools have demonstrated they recognise that even where these principles cannot be adopted in full, even a partial adoption of them will be beneficial in reducing the risk and more than one of the principles can be adopted simultaneously.

We asked Head teachers if they had any outstanding safety concerns or if there were any lessons to be learnt from their own experiences gained during the COVID pandemic. Some examples (not an exhaustive list) of the typical responses we received are given below:

## Primary Schools:

*“We have had one case of COVID 19 with a member of staff. We feel it is very important to have the 2m distance at the front of the class between pupils and staff where possible. This gives extra safety reduces anxiety of staff”.*

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*“No official cases. However, one parent has shown symptoms, tested negative on a number of occasions, was hospitalized and was very poorly. Doctors were convinced that she had Covid despite testing negative on a number of occasions. Both children remained at home as a precaution and received blended learning.*

*Governors are very concerned about the use of Teams sessions with pupils. They are concerned about the potential for images of pupils to be captured during these sessions from the homes of other children as they do not know who is present.*

*Governors were happy for just the teacher’s voice to be used. They were happy for the setting where just the teacher can be seen, without the pupils seeing any other pupils.”*

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*“The Flintshire agreed protocol for schools worked well and was very useful in providing a checklist of necessary actions.*

*Communication with Food Safety/Environmental Health Team was very good and timely.*

*Staff and pupils in the bubble that were self-were expecting to be contacted by TTP as a matter of routine but were not probably as a result of the amount of pupils/staff involved. We have amended our advice to staff to reflect this.*

*There were some issues with our SchoolsComm parent notification for pupils with siblings which have been subsequently amended”.*

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*“One breakfast club staff member, no pupils.*

*Due to the fact that the staff member had consistently kept her distance from the pupils and worn a face mask, gloves and apron at all times the children in breakfast club did not need to self-isolate. Advice was taken from the EH team.*

*We have asked that siblings arrive at the same time, the younger siblings go into breakfast club; however, we were not recording those pupils on the breakfast club register. This had the potential of making it more difficult to identify contacts. Therefore, all younger siblings who now go into breakfast club are recorded on a separate register.*

*A staff member car shared with the staff member who had a positive test. This resulted in that staff member having to self-isolate also. This impacted on the staffing in the school. Staff were reminded not to car share and the importance of keeping their distance from one another.*

*HSE inspection highlighted the need to open blinds [to maximise ventilation], this has been acted upon.*

*One way system introduced on the school yard to avoid people meeting at entrances.”*

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*“As we were the first school to have a positive case, we reflected on practice early on in September. As a result and in order to reduce the number of contacts, we separated and coned off areas of the school playground.”*

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## **Secondary Schools:**

*“Only with one member of staff testing positive. The staff member had been following the RA & operational guidance for social distancing, wearing masks/face coverings & the use of sanitisers (as well as enforcing these requirements with her classes). TTP were happy with their conversation with the staff member that no additional isolations would be required. This incident re-enforces the positive impact of following the school’s RA requirements on virus transmission “*

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*“Bad weather and a lack of covered outside areas means more students are having to remain indoors during dinnertimes, where there is also a lack of meeting areas large enough to accommodate the larger contact groups. Social distancing for supervising staff becomes more challenging due to numbers of students. Students also lack the opportunity of fresh air, having to remain inside where Covid restrictions are more stringent; and behaviour can be more challenging”*

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*“Ensuring staff maintain the required social distance between each other  
Ensuring that communication between school and home is effective and that information is shared quickly  
Importance of remote access to IT systems.”*

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*“Despite identifying bubbles as tutor groups in Years 7, 8 and 9, Environmental Health has required us to isolate whole year groups when a case has been identified (7 separate bubbles). Understanding that the aim is to keep bubbles intact wherever possible has been an important approach. Other control measures have been introduced to reduce contact during unstructured times.”*

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*“Details of which children have travelled on which buses when a case was picked up in year 11. She was not clear which bus she had travelled on. Need to try and keep an up to date list of who travels in daily”*

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## **Special Schools:**

*“Transport need to fully involved and where a positive case occurs on transport such as a driver or escort, then transport need to provide details to EH/TTP as the school does not have these details. Transport also need to be on call as per schools do at evenings and weekends. Escorts should also be keeping a daily register of pupils on their bus (we are only talking small numbers) as school does not have details of who attends via transport each day and who has come in with a parent etc.  
Specific special school guidance would have been useful.”*

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## **Pupil Referral Units:**

*“Social distancing was a concern. This has now been addressed to ensure staff remain vigilant all of the time”*

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION** – FCC schools and educational settings should ensure that its COVID risk assessment is reviewed regularly to ensure that the risk of staff and learners being harmed by the virus has not changed and that no further control measures are needed. The risk assessment is a working document and, as your school/setting experiences change, this information needs to be recorded and updated. During these unusual times of a COVID-19 pandemic and as a guide to what would generally be considered as good practice as to when to review your COVID-19 risk assessment, please refer to FCC Corporate Health and Safety document [Schools COVID 19 RA Review Sheet Oct 2020 v1](#)

**END OF REPORT**

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## EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> January, 2021
<b>Report Subject</b>	Council Plan 2021-22
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets; and Leader of the Council and cabinet Member for Education
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Type of Report</b>	Strategic

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council Plan for 2017-23 was adopted by County Council to show the key priorities of the Council for the five year term of the new administration. The Plan is subject to annual review.

The content of the Council Plan for 2021/22 will continue to take into account continued recovery in addition to our longer-term strategic objectives.

The initial framework for Part One of the next version of the Council Plan is built around six themes:

- Economy
- Education and Skills
- Green Society and Environment
- Affordable and Accessible Housing
- Personal and Community Well-being
- Poverty

Each of these six themes is accompanied by a strategic statement. The statements lend themselves to being Well-being objectives.

The six themes will be mapped out against the respective lead portfolios for reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee have supported the timeline for the development of the plan.

Following Cabinet agreement the next stage of development for the Plan's outline content is for Scrutiny Committees to review and consider its contents. All comments and suggestions will then be collated and shared at Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To review and agree the further developed themes of the Council Plan 2021-22 prior to sharing with Cabinet in March 2021.
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## REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE COUNCIL PLAN 2021/22</b>
1.01	<p>The Council Plan for 2021-22 has a refreshed structure of six themes and supporting priorities which both set ambition with measured realism as follows:</p> <p><b>Theme: Poverty</b> Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Income Poverty</li><li>- Child Poverty</li><li>- Food Poverty</li><li>- Fuel Poverty</li><li>- Digital Poverty</li></ul> <p><b>Theme: Affordable and Accessible housing</b> Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Housing support and Homeless prevention</li><li>- Housing Needs and Housing Options</li><li>- Social Housing</li><li>- Private Rented Sector</li><li>- Empty Properties</li></ul> <p><b>Theme: Green Society and Environment</b> Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Carbon Neutrality</li><li>- Fleet Strategy</li><li>- Green Environment</li><li>- Renewable Energy</li><li>- Active and Sustainable Travel Options</li><li>- Circular Economy</li></ul> <p><b>Theme: Economy</b> Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Town Centre Regeneration</li><li>- Business</li><li>- Transport and digital infrastructure</li><li>- LDP Targets</li><li>- Spending money for the benefit of Flintshire</li><li>- Reducing Worklessness</li></ul> <p><b>Theme: Personal and Community Well-being</b> Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Independent Living</li><li>- Safeguarding</li><li>- Direct Provision to support people closer to home</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Dementia Strategy</li> <li>- A well-connected, safe and clean local environment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Theme: Education and Skills</b></p> <p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educational Engagement and Achievement</li> <li>- Digital Learning Opportunities</li> <li>- Learning Environments</li> <li>- Learning Community Networks</li> <li>- Specialist Educational Provision</li> <li>- Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP)</li> </ul>
1.02	The work on the detail behind the priorities has progressed well and is attached at Appendix 1. Cabinet have agreed to the content. The next step is for all Scrutiny Committees to be consulted with over the next cycle.
1.03	Following this cycle of consultation, the Plan will be presented to Cabinet in its second stage prior to adoption by the County Council in April/May.

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	Council planning and service portfolio business planning is dove-tailed with the periodic review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	<p>Consultation has been carried out with Chief Officers, Cabinet members and the wider internal senior management network on the framework of the Plan.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny committees will have the opportunity to be engaged in the development of the Plan.</p>

<b>4.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>											
4.01	<p><b>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Long-term</td> <td rowspan="5">Throughout the 2021/22 Council Plan development we will ensure the five ways of working are embedded within our ambitions and easily reported on.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Well-being Goals Impact</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Prosperous Wales</td> <td rowspan="4">Throughout the 2021/22 Council Plan development we will be ensuring we capture our contributions to the seven well-being goals within our ambitions.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilient Wales</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Healthier Wales</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More equal Wales</td> </tr> </table>	Long-term	Throughout the 2021/22 Council Plan development we will ensure the five ways of working are embedded within our ambitions and easily reported on.	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement	Prosperous Wales	Throughout the 2021/22 Council Plan development we will be ensuring we capture our contributions to the seven well-being goals within our ambitions.	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales
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Cohesive Wales							
Vibrant Wales							
Globally responsible Wales							
	<p><b>Council's Well-being Objectives</b></p> <p>These are under review as part of this work.</p> <p><b>Risk Management</b></p> <p>The risks to the statutory requirements of the Plan include not publishing the Plan within statutory timescales and not adhering to the prerequisite content.</p> <p>Both these risks are managed through adherence to well established procedures for publishing the Plan.</p>						

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1: Draft Council Plan (Part 1) 2021-22

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	None

<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Jay Davies, Strategic Performance Advisor  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702744  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:jay.davies@flintshire.gov.uk">jay.davies@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
8.01	<p><b>Council Plan:</b> the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set objectives and publish a Plan.</p> <p><b>Medium Term Financial Strategy:</b> a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period, and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations.</p>

## Draft Council Plan 2021/22

Priority Name	Poverty
Description/ Well-being Objective	Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs
<p><b>Income Poverty</b></p> <p>Definition: People on low income who are unable to meet day to day living costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families are supported to be financially resilient by:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Maximising the number of people signposted for support to facilitate longer term behavioural change</li> <li>b) Ensuring that take-up to benefit entitlements is maximised in a timely way by processing claims efficiently</li> <li>c) Maximising take up of the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme and other financial support</li> <li>d) Continuing to offer our community hub (Contact Centres) approach bringing access to a range of programmes, services and agencies together in one place</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Child Poverty</b></p> <p>Definition: Children who don't have access to adequate food, clothing, shelter and education to lead a healthy and active life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost of sending children to school is reduced by:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Making the processes for claiming free school meals as simple and straightforward as possible to increase the percentage of take-up against entitlement</li> <li>b) Encouraging take-up of the free school breakfast for year 7 pupils eligible for free school meals</li> <li>c) Maximising the take-up of the school uniform grant</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Free access to books, ICT networks and devices and library services are maintained by:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Maintaining the network of six libraries in partnership with Aura</li> <li>b) Increasing online access for books by children and young people</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Food Poverty</b></p> <p>Definition: People who are not able to access food that meets their daily nutritional needs and requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone in Flintshire has access to affordable, good fresh food by:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The development of a "Well Fed at Home service" by March 2022</li> <li>b) The development and delivery of a "Hospital to Home" meals service by March 2022</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) The introduction of a transported and delivered food service “Mobile Meals” to those who are vulnerable by March 2022</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fuel Poverty</b></p> <p>Definition: Households that have higher than average fuel costs and meeting those costs will cause them to experience poverty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the risk of fuel poverty for residents by increasing the energy efficiency of all homes by increasing the energy efficiency of homes</li> <li>• Engaging, supporting and referring vulnerable households to reduce fuel poverty and improve health and wellbeing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Digital Poverty</b></p> <p>Definition: Inability to interact fully in a digital world</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and enable access to the internet and devices to ensure people are not excluded from a digital world by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Supporting people to use appropriate digital technology through the Digital Champions Scheme</li> <li>b) Providing free of charge public access to the internet at Connects Centres and Aura library services</li> <li>c) Increasing uptake of access to devices through the Aura Library Loan Scheme</li> <li>d) Increasing take-up of ‘Learn my Way’ digital learning opportunities supported by Aura by Autumn 2021</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support people to access information digitally by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Providing access to council services on the internet in a responsive way (information can be accessed using different devices)</li> <li>b) Promoting initiatives to help people to use digital technology now and in the future.</li> <li>c) Increasing access to information online to support people to retain their digital skills</li> <li>d) Promote the range of digital training and skill development provided by Coleg Cambria</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Priority Name</b>	<b>Affordable and Accessible Housing</b>
<b>Description/ Well-being Objective</b>	Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities
<p><b>Housing support and homeless prevention</b></p> <p>Definition: Offering support at the right time, so people can sustain their housing, prevent homelessness and live well</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission a wide range of housing related support that meets the needs of the people of Flintshire</li> <li>• Promoting housing support and homeless prevention services with our residents and partners</li> <li>• Ensure there is a multi-agency partnership approach to homeless prevention and develop a culture where homelessness is “everyone’s business”</li> <li>• When homelessness does occur, ensure that it is rare, brief and non-recurring</li> <li>• Develop and extend our Housing First and Rapid Rehousing approaches for those who do experience homelessness</li> <li>• Remodel the “emergency beds” Homeless Hub accommodation offer and service delivery</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to develop a young person’s homeless hub offering accommodation and support services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Housing Needs and Housing Options</b></p> <p>Definition: Empowering people to explore their housing options so they can access the right homes to meet their needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH), Common Housing Register, Affordable Housing Register and Housing Support Gateway within the community and with professionals</li> <li>• Develop self-service approaches that enable people to identify their own housing options through online support</li> <li>• Pilot a risk assessment process to identify pre tenancy support needs to reduce risk of tenancy failure</li> <li>• Review our sheltered housing stock to ensure that it continues to meet the need and aspirations of current and prospective tenants</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to develop a young person’s homeless hub offering accommodation and support services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social Housing</b></p> <p>Definition: Working with housing partners to develop and invest in affordable housing, with modern methods of construction,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with housing association partners to build 142 new social housing properties and 32 additional affordable properties</li> <li>• Increasing Flintshire Council’s housing portfolio by building 50 social housing properties and 50 affordable properties for North East Wales (NEW) Homes</li> </ul>

<p>and a commitment towards carbon neutral</p> <p><b>Poverty</b></p> <p><b>Green and Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that Flintshire Council housing stock meets the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and achieves a minimum SAP energy efficiency rating of 65 <a href="#">Link</a></li> <li>• Develop plans for the de-carbonisation of Flintshire Council homes in line with Welsh Government guidance to ensure their thermal efficiency is optimized and the cost of heating homes are minimized <a href="#">Link</a> <a href="#">Link</a></li> <li>• Working with residents to ensure our communities are well managed, safe, and sustainable places to live <a href="#">LINK</a></li> <li>• Supporting our tenants to access technology and create sustainable digital communities</li> <li>• Listening to our tenants and working with them to improve our services, homes and communities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Private Rented Sector</b></p> <p>Definition: Supporting the private sector to raise standards in the management and condition of housing and promote tenancy sustainment in our communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging with private sector tenants, giving them a voice and responding to their needs</li> <li>• Working in partnership with landlords and private sector agents to better understand their needs</li> <li>• Develop a “landlord offer” that encourages landlords to work with the Council to raise standards of property management and condition of homes where needed</li> <li>• Improve access to private sector properties for those who are homeless, at risk of homeless and in housing need</li> <li>• Map all Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO’s) across Flintshire to ensure legal minimum housing standards are met and to improve residents’ quality of life</li> </ul>
<p><b>Empty Properties</b></p> <p>Definition: Bringing empty homes back into use to enhance the local housing market and improve our local communities</p> <p><b>Economy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring empty homes back into use thorough the Empty Homes Loan</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to develop a project management service for non commercial landlords to encourage take up of the Empty Home Loan Scheme</li> <li>• Target problem empty homes in our communities and use enforcement powers where appropriate to improve our communities and increase housing supply</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to maximise housing and revitalize our towns through the redevelopment of the High Street <a href="#">Link</a></li> </ul>



<b>Priority Name</b>	<b>Green Society and Environment</b>
<b>Description/ Well-being Objective</b>	Limiting the impact of the Council’s services on the natural environment and supporting the wider communities of Flintshire to reduce their own carbon footprint.
<b>Carbon Neutrality</b>  Definition: A net carbon zero Council by 2030 and supporting wider decarbonisation actions across the County, making this central to Covid-19 recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance structure (Carbon Programme Board) in place by 30 September 2021</li> <li>• Net carbon zero action plan developed and approved by 31 March 2022</li> <li>• Gather information on annual Council greenhouse gas emissions to submit to Welsh Government and the Carbon Programme Board by 30 June each year</li> <li>• Review of procurement policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from suppliers agreed by 31 March 2022</li> <li>• Develop a policy for sustainable and long term energy usage in capital projects where this can be achieved</li> </ul>
<b>Fleet Strategy</b>  Definition: Reducing the environmental impact of our fleet by maximising the opportunities to utilise sustainable forms of transport across the Council’s fleet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journey Management and driver training: Ensure that all business journeys are subject to proper planning, and avoided wherever possible to minimise unnecessary mileage and environmental impact through use of remote meetings, home working, route optimisation, control of vehicle logs, capture corporate mileage figures etc.</li> <li>• Reduced ‘grey’ mileage through continued use of virtual meeting attendance and reduction in unnecessary journeys through the adoption of new ways of working</li> <li>• Conversion of authority’s fleet to electric and alternative fuels (hydrogen etc) where technically and economically feasible</li> </ul>
<b>Green Environment</b>  <b>Definition:</b> The promotion, good management and protection of our green spaces to deliver multiple benefits to the environment and our residents and visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of the Urban Tree and Woodland Plan</li> <li>• Enhancement of the natural environment through the delivery of the Section 6 Environment Act Wales biodiversity duty</li> <li>• Develop a strategy to improve biodiversity and carbon sequestration on the agricultural estate by 31 December 2021</li> </ul>

<p><b>Renewable Energy</b></p> <p>Definition: The promotion and support of renewable energy opportunities across the Council Estate and wider communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess feasibility of renewable energy and land assets and link to wider carbon ambitions by 30 September 2021</li> <li>• Determine appropriate investment strategy for future renewable energy developments by 31 March 2022</li> </ul>
<p><b>Active and Sustainable Travel Options</b></p> <p>Definition: Provide opportunities for increasing levels of walking and cycling (active travel) and enable access to other alternative and sustainable methods of travel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the use of public transport through the further development of the Council’s core bus network</li> <li>• Promote active travel and further develop the Council’s cycleway network</li> <li>• Promotion of multi modal transport journeys and the development of strategic transport hubs</li> <li>• Development of the County’s electric car charging network</li> <li>• Development of the Council’s walking and cycling network</li> </ul>
<p><b>Circular Economy</b></p> <p>Definition: Support and promote the Welsh Government’s strategy to create a sustainable, circular economy in Flintshire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement of Welsh Government recycling targets</li> <li>• Development and extension of the Standard Yard Waste &amp; Recycling Transfer Station by investing in infrastructure to enable future growth and capacity in terms of increasing the volume and quality of recyclable materials processed and reducing material contamination, thereby maximising potential income for recyclable materials for the Authority</li> <li>• Development and extension of the Greenfield Composting Facility and Waste Transfer Station to future proof the site for increased garden waste tonnages and explore the potential to offer the facility as a regional garden waste composting solution and re-use collection point from our Household Recycling Centres</li> <li>• Support and promote the development of Re-Use and Repair Cafés within the County and encourage charities to adopt our Household Recycling Centres in order to re-use and recover products and materials</li> <li>• Through partnership working, actively support and engage with community led groups by developing initiatives such as plastic free/zero waste</li> </ul>

	<p>communities, environmental projects and re-use and recycling initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local businesses in their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and become more resource efficient</li> <li>• Phase out single-use plastic within the Council</li> </ul>
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Priority Name	Economy
Description/ Well-being Objective	Enabling a sustainable economic recovery
<p><b>Town Centre Regeneration</b></p> <p>Definition: Regenerate and re-invent our town centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor the health and vitality of town centres to support effective management and business investment decisions.</li> <li>• Promote town centre, hospitality and tourism businesses to help with their post-Covid recovery.</li> <li>• Encourage and support investment in town centre properties especially to facilitate more sustainable uses.</li> <li>• Improve the environment in town centres.</li> <li>• Support the growth of community enterprises in town centre locations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Business</b></p> <p>Definition: Enable business continuity and encourage appropriate investment</p> <p style="background-color: #55a868; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>Green Society and Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage small businesses and improve support packages available to them.</li> <li>• Support the post-Covid recovery of Flintshire's street and indoor markets.</li> <li>• Support the growth of the local and regional food and drink business sector through marketing and collaborative projects.</li> <li>• Support the recovery of the tourism and hospitality sectors and rebuild confidence in the industry.</li> <li>• Increase the scale and impact of the social business sector.</li> <li>• Support local businesses in their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and become more resource efficient</li> </ul> <p style="background-color: #55a868; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>Link</b></p>
<p><b>Transport and digital infrastructure</b></p> <p>Definition: Ensure that the transport and digital networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the connection of all eligible public buildings through the Local Full Fibre Network Project.</li> <li>• Start the delivery of the Flintshire elements of the North Wales Growth Deal investment in digital infrastructure.</li> <li>• Connect further rural communities to improved digital infrastructure.</li> </ul>

<p>facilitate and support recovery and growth</p> <p><b>Green Society and Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver transport infrastructure improvements as part of North Wales Metro programme and the Council's Integrated Transport Strategy.</li> <li>• Ensure Flintshire strategic transport priorities are well-represented in the Regional Transport Plan from the forthcoming Corporate Joint Committee development.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Link</a></p>
<p><b>LDP Targets</b></p> <p>Definition: Achieve LDP policy objectives for growth, protection and enhancement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure timely adoption of the LDP once Inspector's Report received</li> <li>• Monitor overall Plan performance via the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and submit to Welsh Government</li> <li>• Maintain and update the LDP housing Trajectory in line with planning decisions made</li> <li>• Make decisions at Planning Committee in line with the adopted LDP</li> <li>• Reference the LDP growth strategy in early work on a North Wales Strategic Development Plan (SDP)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spending money for the benefit of Flintshire</b></p> <p>Definition: Grow our local economic vitality through social value commitments and procurement strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and support commissioners and suppliers to generate additional well being outcomes.</li> <li>• Increase the ability and confidence of local businesses to supply the public sector.</li> <li>• Collate and celebrate the achievement of strategic well being outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reducing worklessness</b></p> <p>Definition: Work with our partners to support individuals to gain employment</p> <p><b>Poverty</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinate a multi-agency approach to support businesses to recruit staff from disadvantaged groups</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Link</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver mentoring and wider support programmes to assist disadvantaged people to re-engage with the labour market. <a href="#">Link</a></li> </ul>

Priority Name	Personal and Community Well-being
<b>Description/ Well-being Objective</b>	Supporting people in need to live as well as they can
<p><b>Independent Living</b></p> <p>Definition: People will be supported to live as independently as possible through the right type of support, when they need it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an additional 32 placements at Marleyfield House Care Home to support older people, with a focus on independence.</li> <li>• Develop and extend our approach to Micro Care so there are more Providers supporting more people in their own homes</li> <li>• Increase the number of people who are able to make their own care arrangements through a Direct Payment</li> <li>• Ensure services for families with children aged 0-7 are better integrated through the 'Early Years Pathfinder' project</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safeguarding</b></p> <p>Definition: Implement and promote the new safeguarding procedures so our employees understand how they can help safeguard people in the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and relaunch our corporate e-learning package to reflect the new safeguarding procedures. This will include extending access to the safeguarding e-learning module to key partners</li> <li>• Promote the 'duty to report' so our employees understand their responsibility to report safeguarding concerns</li> <li>• Implement an 'active offer' of advocacy support for people involved in the safeguarding process</li> </ul>
<p><b>Direct Provision to support people closer to home</b></p> <p>Definition: The services we provide so people can access the support they need in their local community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a registered Children's Home to help avoid the need for residential placements outside Flintshire</li> <li>• Grow our in-house homecare service to support more people to live at home</li> <li>• Grow our in house fostering service to support more looked after children</li> <li>• Extend Croes Atti Care Home for older people, with a focus on dementia care.</li> <li>• Develop the services we offer to provide respite for families with disabled children</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local Dementia Strategy</b></p> <p>Definition: Continuing to improve the lives of people living with dementia in Flintshire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with registered Care homes providers and health partners to develop more long term nursing care placements for people who have dementia.</li> <li>• Develop a Flintshire Dementia strategy that sets a shared vision, and action, for the next phase of developing good dementia support for individuals, families, carers and communities</li> </ul>

<p><b>A well-connected, safe and clean local environment.</b></p> <p>Definition: Resilient communities where people feel connected and safe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect residents and our environment from pollution and other public health and safety hazards by achieving the Streetscene Standard</li> <li>• Keep our local communities clean and safe through engagement, education and environmental enforcement</li> <li>• Work with local communities to inform a long term vision and delivery plan for using the Flexible Funding Grant programme to achieve positive outcomes for people</li> </ul>
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Priority Name	Education and Skills
<b>Description/ Well-being Objective</b>	Enabling and Supporting Learning Communities
<p><b>Educational Engagement and Achievement</b></p> <p>Definition: Providing diverse learning opportunities to support educational achievement in schools and communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain support for the rollout of the revised curriculum for pupils from 3-16 which better prepares them for their future lives and employment</li> <li>• Continue to support the raising of standards at all key stages to enable onward learner progression</li> <li>• Continue to improve attendance and reduce exclusions to maximise educational achievement</li> <li>• Continue to broaden the offer of alternative education opportunities to support learner engagement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Digital Learning Opportunities</b></p> <p>Definition: Supporting education engagement and achievement through proactive use of accessible digital media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support schools and wider education services to increase their digital offer for children and young people.</li> <li>• Develop a new delivery plan for Integrated Youth Services with a greater focus on digital engagement to increase participation</li> <li>• Increase the range of digital material hosted on the North East Wales Archive website and other digital services to encourage greater participation with the service</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support learners who are ‘digitally disadvantaged’ to access IT devices to promote equity and engagement</li> <li>• Delivery of ‘Learn My Way Free’ IT courses in all Libraries from April 2021</li> <li>• From January 2021 provide in partnership with Adult Community Learning informal community training for groups of 6 people in Flint Library to access Zoom and other online learning platforms</li> <li>• Arts Council Funded partnership with Gladstone Library and visual artist to provide digital art workshops based on collections at Gladstone Library</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning Environments</b></p> <p>Definition: Creating aspirational and flexible learning environments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide high quality learning environments through the Council’s capital investment programme and WG grant funding streams</li> <li>• Progress the North East Wales Archive funding bid through the Stage 1 Heritage Horizons Award of the National Heritage Lottery Fund</li> <li>• Increase usage of community spaces in re-developed Flint Library and Wellbeing Hub by 15%</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning Community Networks</b></p> <p>Definition: Supporting our learning communities to engage and achieve through extensive partnership working unpinned by common safeguarding practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the contractual arrangements for the North East Wales Archive between Flintshire CC and Denbighshire CC to provide a sustainable and resilient service</li> <li>• Establish a sub-regional partnership for the delivery of Adult Community Learning with Wrexham CBC to maximise opportunities for participants and providers</li> <li>• Develop a Delivery Plan for Adult Community Learning with new partners to increase engagement and improve skills within local communities</li> <li>• Work with Adult Community Learning and Flintshire Learning Recovery &amp; Wellbeing Network Partners to share best practice and maximise opportunities for learning within the community. Opportunities to be available in all Aura libraries from Summer 2021.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with Open University Wales to support and signpost library users to OpenLearn courses and subsequent learning pathways.</li> </ul>

	<p>OpenLearn Champions in each library from October 2020.</p>
<p><b>Specialist Educational Provision</b></p> <p>Definition:          Extending local capacity to support learners with additional learning needs (ALN)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to embed the implementation plan to deliver a new statutory approach for supporting children and young people with learning needs from 0-25 years</li> <li>• Complete the build project for Plas Derwen (Pupil Referral Unit) to transform the delivery of this specialist service</li> <li>• Increase the capacity of Plas Derwen staff to delivery more outreach work to share their expertise across the schools workforce</li> <li>• Develop a long term strategy to ensure sufficient and appropriate capacity to support learners with a range of additional educational needs that maximises local expertise and financial resources</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP)</u></b></p> <p>Definition:          Working with schools and partners to support the Welsh Government’s strategy to enable one million Welsh speakers by 2050</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the capacity and take up of Welsh medium education to achieve Welsh Government targets</li> <li>• Further Improve the Welsh language skills of staff in schools to more effectively support learners and the delivery of the curriculum</li> <li>• Continue to improve pupils’ standards of Welsh in all schools to encourage greater bilingualism</li> <li>• Extend the range of youth services which can be delivered bilingually to encourage young people to retain and use their Welsh language skills into early adulthood</li> <li>• Maintain Welsh Government Quality Indicator for Welsh Language resources in Aura libraries</li> </ul>