Education Achievement Service
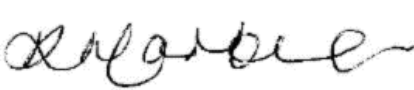
Regional Business Plan

April 2021 - March 2022

(Final Version)

The Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan has undergone a thorough consultation process. The consultees are listed below:

- EAS staff
- Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
- Regional Joint Executive Group
- EAS Company Board
- EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
- All Headteachers from within the region
- All Chairs of Governors from within the region
- School Councils from within the region
- All school based Professional Learning Leads
- EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)

The final version of the Business Plan 2021-2022 will be presented for agreement to the Regional Joint Executive Group and then to each LA Cabinet / Executive in March 2021. The plan will then be submitted to Welsh Government.

Cllr K Preston Chair of Education Achievement Service Company Board	*K. Preston*
Cllr J Collins Chair of Joint Executive Group	*J Collins*
Ms D Harteveld Managing Director, Education Achievement Service	*signature*
Mr Will McClean Lead Director on behalf of South East Wales Directors Group	*signature*

EAS

Contents

Section 1: Position statement

"Especially in times of uncertainty, it is important for the organisation to be agile and to be able to respond quickly to changing needs. In these times of challenge, continue to focus on staying close to schools, listening to the voice of school leaders and working closely with local authorities. Relationships and trust are crucial in times of uncertainty so in spite of the other pressures this needs to continue to be prioritised very strongly and time proactively put aside in diaries to do it." (Steve Munby: Review of the EAS - October 2020)

Our Pledge: Continue to over communicate with clarity, to strengthen collaboration, support schools and settings to embrace change and promote innovation.

This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2021-2022. It is challenging to try to predict the way in which society will be operating from summer 2021 with regards to managing the spread of coronavirus. The priorities contained within this document assume that the EAS will build upon the learning and momentum from the past few months.

However, this plan will also need to consider how schools and settings will operate in a COVID-19 recovery phase and the support that will be required. Consideration will also be given to the priorities that were set and agreed prior to the pandemic in the previous Business Plan 2020-2021 depending on their relevance in the current climate.

The EAS will work collaboratively with local authority partners, wider partners and schools and settings to implement the Business Plan. It is critically important that the EAS remains sensitive and responsive to the needs of the school workforce and will continue to be a highly supportive, reflective and responsive organisation.

The EAS will build upon what has worked well during this period, particularly the aspects of our role that have been successful within the virtual environment. The support that the EAS will offer will fully align to the expectations set by local authorities, Welsh Government (WG) and links to emerging research. The pandemic has reminded us that positive change is and has been possible. Schools, settings and the EAS have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working and delivering meaningful learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences should be built upon to avoid a 'snap back,' keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time.

During this period, the region has facilitated sharing opportunities to capture emerging practice and to discuss their developments and refinements via the Blended Learning task and finish groups and subsequent Masterclass events.

Whilst the challenges schools and learners have faced have been recognised, many leaders have acknowledged that not all learners have been adversely affected by the pandemic and many learners have had positive experiences. Practitioners have responded positively to this period of change, responding with resilience and agility, including evolving their use of technology innovatively to:

- improve communication with learners and the wider school community
- provide the opportunity for innovative pedagogy, enabling more flexible and tailored learning experiences
- enable and enhance collaboration, both internally and with a wider range of partners, broadening opportunities for Professional Learning across the school workforce.

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At the start of the pandemic, no one could have foreseen or anticipated the disruption to the lives of learners, staff and school communities that would happen during the course of the year. Wellbeing will continue to be at the forefront of the regional approach.

Schools and their communities will have had their own unique set of circumstances and will require a bespoke and flexible approach to learning together through this next phase. Every learner will have differing requirements to engage successfully in their continued learning and to fully integrate into the whole school experience when the time is right.

We will continue to research, refine, respond and reflect to school needs. Our established networks will continue to be the mechanism of communicating with schools and settings. The Supporting our Schools website will continue to be the 'go to place' for all resoures and guidance materials.

The EAS understands the need to over communicate with clarity to provide reassurance regarding advice, guidance, support and expectations. As a result, the EAS will work with local authorities to minimise any unnecessary bureaucracy for schools and settings to ensure they are able to focus on their important priorities and their support for learners.

The timing, delivery and focus of the support will be carefully considered in respect of the challenges that are likely to continue into the summer and autumn terms 2021.

Section 2: Regional Context

The centralised model of service delivery that has been adopted across the South East Wales region has enabled efficiencies to be realised, economies of scale to be secured, particularly in relation to avoiding duplication of functions and the ability to secure a range of educational expertise within the region.

The talent and expertise that resides in schools and settings within and beyond the region is incentivised and used effectively to support professional learning and school improvement activity. There has been inevitable fragility in the ability of schools and settings to offer support beyond their own settings because of the pandemic, this situation will be managed with sensitivity and will be constantly reviewed.

Key regional facts and figures

The number of pupils of compulsory school age within the region in 2020 was 73,090. This represents 19% of all pupils in Wales.

There are 233 maintained schools in the region, 16% of all maintained schools in Wales (EAS figure correct from September 2020, Wales figure from PLASC, 2020).

There are 20 Welsh medium primary schools, 3 Welsh medium secondary, 17 Roman Catholic and 11 Church in Wales schools within the region.

The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) is 20.9%. This level of eligibility is the second highest of the four regional consortia with Central South Consortium highest with 21.3% (PLASC, 2020).

In the region, 10% of people aged three and over say that they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 19% (2011 Census, ONS).

The percentage of pupils aged 5 or over from an ethnic minority background is 11.3%.

Based on local authority reported numbers (Summer 2019), 1024 children in the region are looked after (LAC) by a local authority and attend a school in the region. (No new information available and not included on PLASC for 2020)

Overview of school numbers in the region Jan 2021

Blaenau Gwent (25.5% FSM)

3	**Non-maintained Nursery Settings**
19	**Primary** (1 Welsh medium, 3 Roman Catholic, 1 Church in Wales)
2	**Secondary**
2	**Special**
2	**3-16**

Caerphilly (21.6% FSM)

14	**Non-maintained Nursery Settings**
63	**Primary** (11 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
6	**Infant**
4	**Junior**
11	**Secondary** (1 Welsh medium)
1	**Special**
1	**Pupil Referral Unit**
1	**3-18**

Monmouthshire (13.1% FSM)

25	**Non-maintained Nursery Settings**
30	**Primary** (2 Welsh medium, 6 Church in Wales, 2 Roman Catholic)
4	**Secondary**
1	**Pupil Referral Service**

Newport (19.5% FSM)

23	**Non-maintained Nursery Settings**
2	**Nursery**
43	**Primary** (3 Welsh medium, 2 Church in Wales, 6 Roman Catholic)
9	**Secondary** (1 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
2	**Special**
1	**Pupil Referral Unit**

Torfaen (25.0% FSM)

15	**Non-maintained Nursery Settings**
25	**Primary** (3 Welsh medium, 3 Church in Wales, 3 Roman Catholic)
6	**Secondary** (1 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
1	**Special**
1	**Pupil Referral Service**

Overview of regional school / PRU staffing

Local Authority	Number of Teaching Staff	Number of Support Staff
Blaenau Gwent	506	554
Caerphilly	1,523	1,389
Monmouthshire	644	648
Newport	1,475	1,316
Torfaen	779	773
EAS	**4,927**	**4,680**

Overview of regional school governors

Local Authority	Number of school governors*
Blaenau Gwent	327
Caerphilly	1063
Monmouthshire	429
Newport	768
Torfaen	396
EAS	**2983**

Section 3: Regional Priorities 2021-2022

The EAS will endeavour to be a professional partner working with schools and settings. All schools and settings will be entitled to a range of professional learning and bespoke support which aligns to their school improvement priorities. Full consideration will be given to the current climate in which schools and settings are operating. Within this context the priorities of the EAS will be to:

A. Ensure that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remains paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.

B. Provide bespoke support to schools and settings to address the impact of the pandemic on individual learners, as appropriate, in line with their improvement priorities.

C. Continue to provide support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the continued use of, and evaluation of blended and distance learning approaches, particularly in identified secondary schools.

D. Continue to provide support to leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic.

E. Provide professional learning and bespoke support and guidance to schools and settings to help them realise Curriculum for Wales.

F. Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility.

G. Consolidate, promote and further develop regional practitioner networks, enabling effective routes of communication and support.

H. Continue to support the development of leaders at all levels in schools and settings.

I. Further build the capacity and capability of the knowledge and skills of governing bodies (as appropriate), through the regional professional learning offer and bespoke support.

J. Further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings.

K. Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support, ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings and adheres to legislative requirements that fully supports the wellbeing of staff.

Local authority education strategic priorities 2021/22 (provided by each local authority)

The regional priorities and actions contained within this plan will support the implementation of each of the strategic priorities (that fall within the remit of the EAS) that have been identified by individual local authorities. The EAS will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate, and those that arise from the changing local and national situation.

The improvements that are required at regional and local authority level require a strong commitment of partnership-working to be successful. Where local authorities and the EAS work in close partnership, there is evidence, that rapid and sustainable school improvement can be achieved. This joined up approach will be even more critical as we work in partnership to support schools and settings during this challenging time.

Local Authority	Strategic priorities for 2021/2022
Blaenau Gwent	• Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community. • Ensure high quality leadership and teaching that secures good progress for all learners, particularly the vulnerable and those who are eFSM. • Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development. • Secure strong progress in skills, particularly in English and mathematics at key stages 3 and 4. • Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional protocols to secure improvement, in conjunction with the EAS.
Caerphilly	• Further improve the quality of leadership across all phases of education. • Address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on pupil wellbeing and engagement. • Endeavour to ensure the implementation of remote and blended learning strategies provide high quality support to pupils across all phases of education. • Further improve pupils' acquisition of digital competency skills.

Local Authority	Strategic priorities for 2021/2022
Monmouthshire	Monmouthshire strategic priorities for 2020/21 aligned well with the following four recommendations from our Estyn inspection in February 2020. They are: R1 Improve outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals. R2 Further strengthen the focus on increasing the number of pupils achieving excellent standards. R3 Articulate a clear strategy for SEN provision. R4 Strengthen the use of information gathered through self-evaluation to better inform improvement planning. The year that followed has been unprecedented and in managing our response to the global pandemic, our priorities have taken a step back. Instead, we have adopted key strategic aims that can be responsive to emerging needs in a rapidly changing environment. Whilst the current uncertainty remains, we continue to work towards addressing our Estyn recommendations, and prioritising emerging need.
Newport	• Address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity. • Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs. • Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionally affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals. • Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils. • 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.
Torfaen	• Improve the progress (ensure catch up) of all learners, with a particular focus on FSM and vulnerable learners at key stage 4 by ensuring LA services compliment and support regional provision. • Ensure all of Torfaen schools have a clear strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning particularly in secondary schools to reduce within school variation so all pupils, including boys and vulnerable learners, make appropriate progress over time. • Ensure continued development and support for blended learning across all sectors in Torfaen. • Reduce the level of variability in the quality and impact of leadership at all levels in secondary schools in the authority to secure strong, sustained pupil outcomes.

EAS Business Plan 2021/2022

The actions below have been developed in collaboration with our key partners, many of the actions have been refined from the originally agreed Business Plan 2020/2021 and the Revised Business Plan 2020/2021. This plan will be accompanied by a detailed delivery plan.

As noted above, the EAS will be sensitive and responsive to the changing priorities as a result of the pandemic and may need to change direction and repurpose priorities as required. The support will be made available to all schools and settings, there is an understanding that schools and settings are likely to be facing continuing challenges. It will be the decision of leaders to determine the most appropriate type and timing of at any of the support on offer in line with their priorities.

The content of this plan will continue to support the implementation of the priorities within the National Mission document and will seek to support the recommendations from Estyn's remit report: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020.

Priority A	Ensure that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remains paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG,CCBC,NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to: • R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils			
What will the EAS do?			
• Refine the regional Equity and Wellbeing Strategy (which encompasses strategies for all disadvantaged and vulnerable learners) to further develop multi-agency working, to build on the universal provision for all schools and settings. • Enhance the regional wellbeing offer to practitioners and learners. • Create an online interactive curriculum tool that captures the resources available to support schools in shaping their provision for Health and Wellbeing at a local and regional level. • Provide a programme of professional learning to build the capacity within schools and settings to support learners with their emotional health and wellbeing based upon the principles of adverse childhood experiences. • Support schools and settings to adopt the National Whole School Approach to Wellbeing and Mental Health.			

Priority B	Provide bespoke support to schools and settings to address the impact of the pandemic on individual learners, as appropriate, in line with their improvement priorities.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			

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

- 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 disproportionally affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

What will the EAS do?

- Undertake professional dialogue with schools and settings to agree on school's improvement priorities and support.
- Work with schools and settings to develop a supportive regional approach to the development of a broad range of skills that is bespoke and flexible, ensuring learners receive the most approach provision to engage successfully in their continued learning.

Supporting a self-improvement system

- Refine the Challenge Adviser Role to reflect national model for school support identification and ensure key focus on support for school improvement.
- Identify lead schools and settings considering strengths in leadership capacity, curriculum design, learning culture and behaviour to support system wide improvement, including support for distance and blended learning.
- Broker school-to-school collaboration and cluster working.
- Refine the Learning Network Schools approach to reflect new and emerging service priorities.
- Develop a bespoke peer working model that builds mutual and reciprocal peer support to achieve increased levels of excellence across schools.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for schools, governing bodies and local authorities to understand the changing assessment and accountability arrangements within the reform agenda.

Supporting School Self Evaluation and Quality Assurance

- Further develop a broader range of evaluation criteria that do not focus solely on end of key stage outcomes but look at a wider range of school improvement information, including quality and effectiveness of distance and blended learning.
- Provide professional learning to all schools and settings to promote effective self-evaluation, improvement planning processes and effective strategies for formative and summative assessment.
- Further develop the regional approach of 'School on a page' so that a broader range of information is used for accountability purposes focused on pupils' wellbeing and attitudes to learning, the standards achieved, and progress made by all pupils including those in vulnerable groups, the quality of teaching and learning in schools and settings as well as the quality of leadership.
- Support Schools to effectively quality assure their processes for distance and blended learning.
- Establish mechanisms whereby schools may engage peers in the self-evaluation process to gain external perspective on improvement priorities including distance and blended learning.
- Support the continuing pilot of the national evaluation and improvement resource (NEIR) in identified regional schools as context dictates and ensure key learning is shared with all schools and settings.
- Further develop the use of pupil progress data at school level in line with national guidance taking into account the situation with the pandemic.
- Provide a comprehensive professional learning programme for elected members that supports the regional and national priorities around evaluation and quality assurance including distance and blended learning in order that they are able to hold schools to account more effectively.

Priority C	Continue to provide support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the continued use of, and evaluation of blended and distance learning approaches, particularly in identified secondary schools.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:

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

- R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs

What will the EAS do?

Teaching and Learning

- Provide a range of delivery models and access to a wider range of blended professional learning across all areas of learning to support schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning within and beyond the region.
- Use the established network of school practitioners to further enhance the regional website as a mechanism to share effective whole school strategies for teaching and learning, including distance and blended learning.
- Support schools to use a range of first-hand evidence to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including distance and blended learning through a modelled, shared and guided approach.
- Continue to work in partnership with key partners, to include Welsh Government and Higher Education Institutions to offer a programme of professional learning to develop staff proficiency in the Welsh language.
- Review the regional Welsh Language Strategy to ensure this addresses the regional and national priorities.
- Continue to support and work collaboratively with school leaders, as appropriate, to develop and refine whole school teaching and learning strategies, using a team around the school model.
- Continue to provide a range of strategies to support leadership of teaching and learning e.g., school to school, research informed approaches, virtual professional learning and networking opportunities.

Targeted support for the secondary phase (in addition to above)

- To ensure schools are made aware of key messages from WG and from QW and WJEC on the assessment process for awarding centre determined grades for 2021. To promote the sharing of practice between schools regionally and nationally.
- To support schools through the process of CDG awarding, as identified by the Design and Delivery Advisory Group and the QW/WJEC agreed process and to facilitate Professional Learning in key features of assessment for qualification, in partnership with other organisations as appropriate.
- Supporting schools to ensure that curriculum pathways provide an appropriate choice for all learners.
- Engage with Careers Wales to design a programme that offers learners career advice from year seven onwards to map their flightpaths to their desired destinations.
- Design and facilitate national online resources to complement the middle leadership programme for more able and SEREN school leads.
- To support schools with Sixth Forms to have access to Russell Group Universities to support them with their SEREN learners.
- Collaborate with schools and other sectors to share and analyse outcome and destination data at key stage 5 for all groups of learners.

Priority D	Continue to provide support to leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:

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

- R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionally 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

What will the EAS offer schools and settings?

Specific focus on improving the outcomes of Vulnerable Learners
- Implement the regional plan for Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards (RRRS) to provide appropriate support and guidance for identified learners to make progress.
- Design and facilitate professional learning for specialist teaching assistants in partnership with local authorities and settings.
- Evaluate the current range of enhanced curriculum opportunities funded via the pupil development and RRRS grants to share best practice across the secondary phase.
- Capture best practice of a range of curriculum offers that are provided in PRU and Special school settings.

Partnership Working: LA Inclusion Leads
- Implement a revised regional approach, as appropriate, to improve the monitoring and impact of the pupil development grant.
- Work in partnership with local authorities to analyse attendance and exclusions data for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and support school leaders to share effective practice and to improve outcomes, as appropriate.
- Work in partnership with local authorities to analyse FSM and LAC data and provide additional advice and support for schools and settings who have an increase in these groups as a result of COVID.

Partnership Working: External Partners
- Continue to work in partnership with Challenge Education to support the 'RADY' network of schools engaged with the 'Raising the achievement of disadvantaged youngsters' programme.
- Commission and external evaluation of the impact of the RADY programme.

Partnership Working: ALN reform
- Work with local authority partners to explore and agree roles and responsibilities with regards to the EAS role in securing the effective regional provision for ALN.
- Support, as appropriate, the Regional ALN Transformation Officer to update stakeholders on ALN Reform and support the delivery of professional learning in line with the remit of the work of the EAS.

Targeted Support for Schools and Settings:
- Continue to provide support to school leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected as a result of COVID pandemic.
- Support schools to develop coherent approaches to improve progress in literacy, numeracy digital, and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils and those learners disproportionally affected by the pandemic.

- Refine the current Teaching and Learning Strategy to include an annex supporting the teaching and learning of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of learners.
- Work in collaboration with schools to provide resources to support learners from non-Welsh speaking homes in welsh medium provision who have been disproportionally affected by the pandemic.
- Extend the Vulnerable Learner Lead Programme through primary and secondary settings.
- Refine the grant planning system and the processes in place to support the planning, reviewing and evaluating of impact of expenditure in line with the research from the Education Endowment Foundation.
- Provide a programme of professional learning through a 'Train the Trainer' approach that provides the foundations of universal provision across all schools and settings. This will include strategy development and professional learning for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of learners.
- Improve pupil voice and pupil participation across the region in partnership with the School and Super Ambassador Programme to influence school and regional priorities.
- Deliver a regional programme across all settings supporting More Able and Seren Learners.

Priority E	Provide professional learning, bespoke support, and guidance to schools to help them realise Curriculum for Wales.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:

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

- R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs
- 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

What will the EAS do?

- Provide all schools and settings with access to the national professional learning programmes to support the implementation of the curriculum for Wales. Ensure that this professional learning reflects the priorities set out in the national implementation plan.
- Provide schools and settings with examples of effective school development actions for curriculum reform and provide bespoke support to schools and settings to implement these.
- Support settings to engage in the pilot of the non-maintained nursery curriculum, as appropriate.
- Encourage all schools and settings to be research informed by creating a network of lead enquirers to develop the capacity for professional enquiry in all schools.
- Review the regional Welsh language strategy in collaboration with school leaders and other partners, considering the findings for future delivery models.
- Encourage schools and settings to actively seek resources and experiences that support learners to understand the stories of different groups, including diverse and minority groups, and enable all learners to see themselves and their experiences and knowledge developed through the curriculum.

Priority F	Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

What will the EAS do?

- In partnership with other regions and higher education institutions, provide a national mentoring and coaching programme to develop and support school leaders and governors.

Schools as Learning Organisations

- Ensure all professional learning is underpinned by the principles of effective learning organisations and encourages schools to develop as effective learning organisations.
- Provide coordinated support to ensure all schools develop as effective learning organisations e.g., how to use the survey to inform school development priorities.
- Share case studies where schools and clusters are effectively developing as learning organisations.

Professional learning teaching assistants

- Provide a virtual professional learning offer that supports teaching assistants whether new to the role, a practicing teaching assistant or as an experienced higher-level teaching assistant.
- Design and facilitate professional learning for specialist teaching assistants in partnership with local authorities, Special Schools and PRU's.

Professional Learning for statutory induction

- Refine and develop a Nationally designed virtual induction professional learning offer to support all those who support the induction process including: Newly Qualified teachers, the school-based induction mentor, and the external verifier.
- Continue supporting early career teachers beyond the statutory induction period.
- Further strengthen partnership working with HEI institutions to offer joint induction support for early career entry.

Initial Teacher Education

- Continue to work with higher education partners, cross regional partners and schools in developing and delivery of all routes into initial teacher education, as appropriate within the current arrangements.

Priority G	Consolidate, promote and further develop regional practitioner networks, enabling effective routes of communication and support.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:

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- R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs
- 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

What will the EAS do?

- Review all existing networks to ensure all practitioners have access to relevant networking opportunities with colleagues within and beyond the region.
- In partnership with schools and settings continuingly review their capacity to support the wider system.

Priority H	Continue to support the development of leaders at all levels in schools and settings.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:

Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:
- 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 disproportionally affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

What will the EAS do?
- Further develop the strategic approach to identifying and supporting the next group of leaders within the region.

National professional learning offer for leaders
- Provide a blended professional learning offer in partnership with higher education institutions and other regions to support leaders at all levels in all schools and settings through a nationally endorsed range of programmes: Middle leadership, senior leadership, aspiring headteacher / preparation for NPQH, NPQH, New and Acting headteachers, experienced headteachers.
- Work in partnership with local authorities to support school leaders to address the actions, as appropriate, contained within the Welsh in Education strategy and Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy.

Identifying, recruiting and retaining effective leaders
- Identify aspirational leaders and provide them with bespoke professional learning and a range of leadership experiences that supports them to develop an individual professional learning journey, particularly within the Welsh medium and secondary sectors.
- Work with local authorities and governing bodies to explore a range of leadership models e.g. Executive headship
- Regional specialist HR will work with local authorities to review and revise senior leadership recruitment processes to include using evaluations from a range of stakeholders and professional learning for appointment panel members.
- In partnership with other regions and higher education institutions, provide a national mentoring and coaching programme to develop and support school leaders and governors.

Specialist HR
- Work with local authorities to complement existing education HR services and provide a range of specialist HR professional learning for school leaders and governors.

Priority I	Further build the capacity and capability of the knowledge and skills of governing bodies (as appropriate), through the regional professional learning offer and bespoke support.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

	Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability		

What will the EAS offer schools and settings?

- Continue to refine the delivery of the Governor Support Service Level Agreement (2020-22), ensuring governing bodies are supported through timely, constructive guidance that enables effective governance.
- Further develop professional learning for governors, including online materials, interactive and recorded workshops, regular briefings for all chairs of governing bodies, support for existing self-evaluation tools and the development of a cluster-based approach.
- Provide focused professional learning for chairs and vice chairs of governing bodies in secondary schools, that supports them in addressing phase specific challenges.
- Develop a pilot programme to develop coaching approaches for Chairs of Governors.
- Provide opportunities for collaborative professional learning for school leaders and governors, encouraging and enabling peer support arrangements for governing bodies to refine and develop their capacity to support their schools.
- Identify governors who can undertake additional roles within and beyond their own governing bodies, providing bespoke professional learning to strengthen and build capacity within the region.

Priority J	**To further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings.**		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability	**Link to LA Strategic Priorities**	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

What will the EAS offer schools and settings?

- Work collaboratively with a range of partners to develop a regional approach that identifies and values the characteristics of an effective school.
- Identify a broader range of evaluation strategies that do not focus solely on end of key stage outcomes but looks at a wider range of school improvement information.
- Provide a comprehensive professional learning programme for elected members that supports the regional and national priorities around evaluation and quality assurance including distance and blended learning in order that they are able to hold schools to account more effectively.
- Determine the support arrangements for all schools in line with national guidance considering how regional consortia and local authorities can agree with the school the additional support it needs to improve and to build its own capacity to improve and considering specifically distance and blended learning.

Priority K	i. **Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support and ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings.** ii. **Ensure the EAS adheres to legislative requirements and fully supports the wellbeing of staff.**
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability

Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:

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

- 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

What will the EAS do?

Business delivery model

- Continue to refine the business model for the EAS to ensure that it aligns to regional and national priorities and addresses the needs of schools and settings.
- Maintain the credibility of the service using EAS core staff and the move to the school led system whilst ensuring effective provision and value for money.
- Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support and ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings.
- Ensure the EAS adheres to legislative requirements and fully supports the wellbeing of staff.
- Use the Investors in People development programme to support service improvements.
- Refine and enhance the communication and marketing strategy to ensure appropriate stakeholder engagement, to include the development of a regional pupil forum.
- Continue to engage with other consortia and middle-tier organisations, such as Estyn, to realise efficiencies in programme development and delivery.
- Support and advise local authorities, as appropriate, in the delivery of their statutory functions for SACRE and the development of individual Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

Staff Development

- To maintain high levels of staff morale and wellbeing in the backdrop of reduced funding and the implementation of change management processes.
- Continue to develop collaborative ways in which the EAS team contribute to and feel part of the decision-making processes and are recognised more systematically for their successes.
- Provide access to coaching and mentoring support for all staff.
- Maintain a high-quality, well informed, flexible and motivated workforce that represent the service values and vision.
- Embed performance management processes and extend the professional learning opportunities for staff that meet individual and service needs.
- Ensure all EAS staff are well informed regarding all aspects of the reform agenda.

Funding, Resourcing and Governance

- Work with key partners to deliver a more sustainable funding model that aligns with the workforce plan and secures an updated Collaboration and Members Agreement.
- Continue to develop the regional grant mapping tool to enable more efficient and effective interrogation of data, impact capture and value for money at school, LA and regional level.
- Continue to publish the regional grant allocations and maximise delegation rates to schools.
- Refine the value for money model, further exploring access to comparative data.
- Managing a complex governance interface to ensure communication, satisfaction and engagement levels remain high.

Section 4: Ambitions for 2021/2022

Working in partnership with local authorities, schools and setting the ambitions for 2021/22 and beyond are challenging to capture without having clarity around the changing nature of the pandemic and the effect it will have on schools and settings. In this regard, the ambitions below need to be read within the context they have been derived:

- The EAS has placed wellbeing at the forefront of its work and has provided a range of professional learning to schools and settings that has provided support to the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.

- There is a clear strategy to improve the quality of distance and blended learning experiences for learners. There has been good engagement in the regional strategy and many opportunities have been provided for schools to share to develop more effective teaching across and within schools and settings.

- Schools and settings receive the right type of support, as appropriate to help them make appropriate progress against their school improvement priorities.

- Most schools can identify and provide the most appropriate support to specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, including those who have been disproportionally affected by school closures, to help them to progress.

- A regional strategy developed in collaboration with practitioners provides a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy, digital and personal and social skills of learners who have been disproportionally affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals.

- The quality and impact of the provision for professional learning for educational practitioners and governors is good and those schools that have engaged are able to evidence the impact of this.

- Refined and extended networks ensure effective collaboration and communication to support school improvement.

- A range of professional learning and bespoke support provided to schools and settings helps them realise Curriculum for Wales.

- Working with schools and local authorities, a regional model of support will be developed and implemented, focusing on accurate self-evaluation using a broad range of characteristics, aligned to school improvement priorities.

- Evaluations of the impact of regional policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic will be used to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.

Section 5: Delivery arrangements for 2021/2022

Governance and funding

The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by a Collaboration and Members agreement (CAMA) and Articles of Association. Ensuring that the EAS provides value for money is of utmost importance. As recipients of public funding, it is important that budgets are allocated wisely. We will endeavour to deliver even better value for money through achieving financial balance and delivering services within the constraints of our budget, making further efficiency savings wherever possible and ensuring delegation rates to schools are maximised.

How will the EAS held to account for the delivery and impact of this Business Plan?

The progress on the implementation and impact of the Business Plan will be reported formally at a mid-year basis to the Joint Executive Group and Company Board; this will include an evaluation of the regional plan and of each individual local authority annex document. These reports, as in previous years, will be suitable for scrutiny activity at local authority and national level. In addition, the progress made towards the implementation of key actions will be reported at each meeting of the Joint Executive Group and Company Board.

This year the EAS will report additional information on a termly basis, to both the Joint Executive Group and local authorities around the progress and impact of its work in support of each local authority strategic objective and their related success criteria and the progress schools are making towards their individual targets. This approach will be aligned to the national changes in the accountability system.

Throughout the year there will be many interim impact reports associated with the implementation streams within the Business Plan which will be reported through each of the governance groups, though individual LA committees (as requested) and though evaluation and improvement events with Welsh Government officials, These include: reports on pupil outcomes and progress, progress on schools causing concern, regular updates on outcomes/impact from regional / local authority self-evaluation activity and regional strategies, feedback from external reviews, annual regional value for money report, Managing Director's Annual Report, outcomes from regional school and governor surveys.

The financial accounts are reported to both the company board on a quarterly basis and through the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on a termly basis. The final year end accounts are externally audited and reported in line with the 2016 UK Corporate Governance Code. In compliance with the Companies Act these accounts are reported and approved at the Annual General Meeting by the Joint Executive Members who are shareholders of the EAS.

Consortium funding

The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, regional school improvement grants and a service level agreement for governor support services. A spending plan accompanies the Business Plan which is intrinsically linked to all actions contained within it. A detailed overview of the regional distribution of all grants is available for all schools to view and compare allocations and rates of delegation through the regional grant monitoring tool.

Delegation rates to schools has increased to 94.4% whilst the EAS staff profile has reduced by 53.1% since 2012.

Local authority contributions 2021/2022

Local authority funding for consortium working is underpinned by the National Model for Regional Working, published by the Welsh Government in 2014. The model recommended a core funding allocation of £3.6m for the EAS. The current LA core contribution is based on these figures less year

on year efficiencies of £1.23m since 2012 agreed in collaboration with the 5 local authorities. The local authorities' indicative figures for 2021/22 are as follows:

Local Authority	£
Blaenau Gwent CBC	£351,806
Caerphilly CBC	£985,591
Monmouthshire CC	£405,844
Newport CC	£787,227
Torfaen CBC	£506,028
Total	**£3,036,496**

LAs Core Contribution as a %

- Blaenau Gwent CBC — 12%
- Caerphilly CBC — 32%
- Monmouthshire CC — 13%
- Newport CC — 26%
- 17%
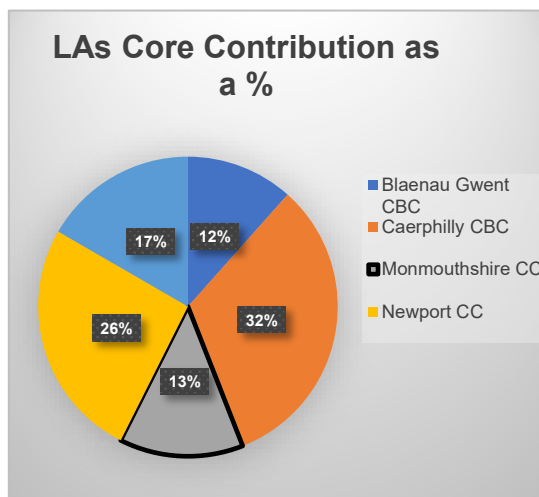
In terms of the above £0.796m of this figure is used to secure capacity within the EAS team from current serving headteachers and schools and £0.2m of this figure is used to secure service level agreements and venue costs sourced through local authorities.

Regional school improvement grants

The Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA) details the procedure that needs to be followed for all school improvement grants received into the region. All grants are approved by local authority Chief Education Officers / Directors of Education with a follow up ratification from JEG members.

Grant Name (To be updated when information on grants is received from Welsh Government)	Grant Total	Amount delegated to schools	Delegation* Rate	Regionally Retained
	Indicative Calculation 2021/22			
	£	£		£
Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG)				
- Education Improvement Grant	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
- Professional Learning for Teachers	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
- Other grant initiatives	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Pupil Development Grant (PDG)	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
PDG (Lead Regional PDG Adviser)	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Seren Pre 16	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Seren Post 16	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Total	**TBC**	**TBC**	**TBC**	**TBC**

*Delegation: This refers to funding which gives freedom of choice to a school in how it is used. It must however be spent in accordance with, and in the spirit of, the core purpose of the grant and the individual school development plan.

Governor Support Service Level Agreement

The EAS has responsibility for providing a Governor Support service to all schools in the region. The service provides support to school governing bodies, headteachers, and individual governors. This includes advice, guidance, training, and an optional clerking service to support governing bodies to deliver their responsibilities.

The optional clerking service is provided through an annual service level agreement with an option to buy into a clerking service and then additionally a statutory committee clerking service. Only two school opted not to buy into the clerking service in 2020/21. The indicative funding for 2021/22 is £0.387m.

Section 6: Additional supporting documents

This Business Plan is supported by the following documents:

- Detailed Business Plan 2021–2022
- Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2021–2022 (to follow once detailed received from WG)
- Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
- EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
- Regional Professional Learning Offer 2021–2022
- Local Authority Strategic Education Plans