



## EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 8TH APRIL 2014

**SUBJECT: NATIONAL MODEL FOR REGIONAL WORKING ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To apprise Members of developments in relation to the new national model for regional working on school improvement.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Hill Review sets out a number of options for improving the delivery and structure of education services in Wales. One of the options identified focuses around the need for greater consistency in the delivery of school improvement services via the regional education consortia. This view was endorsed by local government through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) response to the Hill Review in September, 2013.
- 2.2 A subsequent key commitment on the part of local government has been to co-construct a National Model for Regional Working on School Improvement (hereafter referred to as the Model) with the Welsh Government. The aim of the Model is to bring consistency and stability to local authority regional school improvement services.
- 2.3 The work to develop the Model took place in October and early November 2013, with representatives from WLGA, Council Leaders, Chief Executives, Directors of Education, Welsh Government (WG) officials and a number of education professionals and academics identified by the WG. In order to undertake the work in a timely manner, a number of working groups were established. These groups worked on different aspects of the Model, including clarity over the definition of school improvement, governance, commissioning, budgets and business planning for regional services.
- 2.4 The Model was agreed by the Minister and the WLGA Co-ordinating Committee in late November 2013. There has been a very tight timescale to undertake this work, but it has been genuine co-construction. Inevitably, there have been concessions on all sides.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The 5 Council and the Company Education Achievement Service (EAS) Collaboration and Members' Agreement.
- 3.2 The Deed of Contribution.

#### 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Wales needs for its future success in the world young people who are clever, skilled, happy and healthy, and an educational system that helps to produce them.
- 4.2 Welsh Government will use the Hill review to help to shape Wales' education reform programme and the national model for school improvement is an integral part of that.
- 4.3 The development of the national model is a shared endeavour between schools, local authorities, regional consortia and the Welsh Government. It recognises the important role each tier has to play in improving outcomes for children and young people. The national model will create the structures and define the framework within which this partnership will function but it will require a shared commitment and moral purpose for the system as a whole to deliver the improvements in education and life chances that all children in Wales deserve.
- 4.4 It is based on a vision of regional school improvement consortia working on behalf of local authorities to lead, orchestrate and co-ordinate the improvement in the performance of schools and in the education of young people. The prime mission and purpose of regional consortia is to help those who educate our children and young people. So, in future, the non-negotiable job of the Regional Consortium will be to support schools and local authorities in their efforts to:
- improve learner outcomes for all young people;
  - ensure the delivery of high quality teaching and learning; and
  - support and empower school leaders to better lead their schools.
- 4.5 In particular, the Regional Consortium will :-
- share monitoring information with local authorities on a termly basis or more frequently if a school is in an Estyn category, or causing concern;
  - encourage and facilitate governor networks to enable governors to share practice and develop;
  - arrange the improvement support on behalf of a school in consultation with headteachers and the governing board if the school has low attainment; and
  - quickly make recommendations on school interventions by local authorities and support the implementation of any interventions.
- 4.6 The local authority (LA) will have a responsibility to work with the regional consortium whilst retaining its statutory accountability for school performance and the power to intervene if it is felt that a school has issues which if left on its own, it would not be able to resolve.
- 4.7 In particular, the LA must identify a lead officer to act as the main point of contact with the Regional Consortium and will be responsible for delivering either through their own staff or by working in partnership with another LA :-
- organisation of schools and school places;
  - special educational and additional learning needs;
  - school transport;
  - school meals;
  - safeguarding services;
  - education welfare;
  - behaviour and attendance;
  - employees' pay and conditions of service.

4.8 It is expected that local authorities will share with the Consortium :-

- their overall vision and development priorities;
- school organisation plans;
- support for pupils including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN); and
- safeguarding arrangements

and provide all relevant information and data required to help them to do their work.

4.9 The Model suggests that governance is best placed in a Joint Committee. Members of the Joint Committee would be appointed by the constituent local authorities. This group would be supported by an executive board who would act in a more operational capacity in relation to the regional service. The model currently in operation within South East Wales does not sit naturally with the proposed National Model. Therefore, legal advice is being taken to ensure compliance with company regulations and the proposed National structure.

4.10 As part of the new arrangements, it was agreed that a common business plan template was required to enable consortia to clearly identify their key priorities for the year and the expected outcomes. The Minister for Education and Skills will use the plans as the basis of an outcome agreement with consortia and will formally accept (or not) the plans on an annual basis. The process of submitting and signing off a business plan should be completed by the end of March of each year.

4.11 Through regular Review and Challenge events (formerly stocktakes), WG will monitor progress and hold consortia and local authorities to account for their performance against the priorities and outcomes noted in the business plans. The plan must be :-

- focused on strategic outcomes;
- dovetail effectively with the outcomes identified in statutory local authority plans;
- deliver national and local priorities to impact on outcomes for learners;
- used to inform democratic accountability arrangements; and
- informed by effective data analysis and need.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 In October, 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills issued a written statement outlining his acceptance of the proposal from local government to protect school improvement funding within the local government budget settlement and to jointly construct a National Model for Regional Working.

6.2 The agreement replaces the proposal in the Hill Review to fund regional school improvement services through a transfer out of the Revenue Settlement Grant (RSG). WG agrees local authority contributions to school improvement functions will be protected on the basis of the methodology and funding identified in papers submitted to the Distribution Sub Group and Finance Sub Group.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no personnel implications at this stage. Additional services listed in the national model may be incorporated into regional delivery models, in phases, subject to a satisfactory business case for each and a supporting transition plan to ensure service continuity and performance. This will involve appropriate consultation with staff and their representatives.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 All comments received have been reflected in the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 Members note the content of the report prior to endorsement of the National Model by Cabinet.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To be apprised of developments at a national level to develop consistency in regional school improvement services across Wales.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Act 1972  
School Standards and Framework Act 1998

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Presentation : The National Model