



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15TH FEBRUARY 2022

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS
PLAN 2022-2025**

**REPORT BY: DEBBIE HARTEVELD, MANAGING DIRECTOR, EAS.
TO BE DELIVERED BY EDWARD PRYCE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – POLICY AND STRATEGY**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan on an annual basis. This report asks for members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2022-2025 as part of the regional consultation process, before submission of the final EAS Business Plan to Caerphilly Cabinet for approval.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This document contains the main priorities, following robust self-evaluation processes, that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2022-2025. The EAS delivers, through this agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role Caerphilly LA has in delivering their statutory functions, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.
- 2.2 The plan is subject to a consultation process. All feedback from a broad range of stakeholders will be incorporated into the Final Version of the Business Plan for consideration and approval at Caerphilly cabinet.
- 2.3 This plan supports Caerphilly's Education Strategy which directly correlates with the Welsh Government plans to Renew and Reform. Welsh Government acknowledges the pandemic has had a significant impact on learners and disruption has been a significant challenge.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to receive the report for information and take the opportunity to comment on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process; and

3.2 Members are asked to consider the main strengths and areas for development within Caerphilly, and to consider how EAS and LA services can be aligned, therefore ensuring all pupils meet their full potential.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The EAS are required to submit their Business Plan to Welsh Government and the Caerphilly Scrutiny committee asked for feedback before Caerphilly Cabinet are scheduled to consider it for approval.

5. THE REPORT

Background

5.1 Following the consultation session with Caerphilly CMT, the table below captures the changes that will be implemented within the final version of the Business Plan:

Caerphilly CMT Feedback	What the EAS will change in response for the final version of Business Plan 2022-2025
<p>How do we measure your impact? We would expect to see this clearly in the Business Plan. The EAS needs to be explicit on how impact is measured.</p> <p>Caerphilly needs a clear narrative in school improvement progress, for example the fact that there are no secondary schools in a category. It was explained that engagement data / case studies were not sufficient.</p>	<p>The following changes will be made to enable CCBC to measure the impact of the EAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the draft document there are four high level impact statements, detailing our expected impact by 2025. Following CMT feedback success criteria will be developed, aligned to the high-level activities. This has been agreed with CCBC Chief Education Officer. • We will continue to report on progress towards success criteria in a variety of ways, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Partnership Meetings • Termly Overviews • Case studies • Scrutiny Reports, bespoke to LAs • EAS Governance Reports • In addition, in order to provide a clear narrative for schools’ progress, the EAS will, report in addition to the case studies a succinct impact report: ‘Stats and Stories.’
<p>Expressed the concern that the plan does not adequately address the Covid context?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EAS has now reviewed the high-level actions within the draft business plan to ensure they fully align with the Education Directorate’s Re-ignite, Recover, Reform priorities. The Covid context is addressed through the Health, Wellbeing and Equity section of the plan. Internal detailed delivery plans will provide the specific actions required. • Welsh Government information related to the COVID context will be included.

Asked how Caerphilly can hold the EAS to account?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governance structure enables CCBC to hold the EAS to account. • EAS officers will continue to meet regularly with the Chief Education Officer to enable the Local Authority to undertake its statutory functions. • EAS officers are always available to support officers present to and answer questions at scrutiny.
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5.2 The EAS delivers, through an agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of Caerphilly LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.

5.3 This plan supports Caerphilly's Education Strategy which directly correlates with the Welsh Government plans to Renew and Reform. Welsh Government acknowledges the pandemic has had a significant impact on learners and disruption has been a significant challenge. The key areas, which WG, CCBC and the EAS will address are as follows:

- Learners will need support to develop a secure foundation for learning;
- Learners will need support to continue to progress, developing their skills, knowledge and understanding;
- Practitioners will need support for their own wellbeing;
- The educational system is already working towards reform.

5.4 The evidence from Welsh Government suggests that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others. Therefore, the final EAS Business Plan will be updated to reflect this additional concern, recognising and supporting different groups of learners in the most appropriate way. In particular:

- Vulnerable or disadvantaged learners, and learners with ALN have not necessarily had access to the support they need; some may have faced challenges with distance learning, and some with readjusting to face-to-face learning. We need also to support those learners whose circumstances have changed during the pandemic, who may not have previously fallen into this category;
- Learners in Early Years education are at a critical stage for language, social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Pupils risk missing key development milestones, which could impact on their emotional wellbeing, communication and learning development. They may have specific challenges in finding a sense of belonging in their schools or settings, or in being away from their families;
- Learners in post-16 and transition and those moving into post-16 provision will be concerned with progressing to their next steps, as well as their longer-term employability and skills. These learners will have experienced particular pressures and uncertainty, and their confidence will have been affected;
- Specific challenges for Welsh immersion learners in English-speaking households, and learners transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7.

- 5.5 Joint Executive Group (JEG) Members agreed that the EAS should move to a 3-year Business Plan model with a detailed annual update for Members to agree as per the requirements within the Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA). Prior to the consultation version of the Business Plan being completed a series of 'Visioning Sessions' have been held with all key partners invited to attend.
- 5.6 As an organisation we have reviewed how we have written the Business Plan and communicated this to our partners. We decided it was timely to review and adapt this process and to make it more accessible to a wider audience. We want the plan to articulate the changes and impact we want to make as the regional school improvement service for South-East Wales and the connections and actions needed that will allow that change and impact to be successfully achieved. This Business Plan spans a three-year period and will be subject to an annual review and updates to the annual programme.
- 5.7 This plan also considers how schools and educational settings continue to face the challenges of the pandemic. The EAS will remain sensitive and responsive to the needs of the workforce and will continue to be a highly supportive, reflective, and responsive organisation.
- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 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.
- 5.10 The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and trends within Caerphilly will continue to be met through bespoke work with each school, both virtually and when safe to do so physically.
- 5.11 The EAS will offer an evolving Professional Learning Offer (PLO) to all schools and settings within Caerphilly, in order to meet development needs as we emerge from the pandemic. We will continue to fund schools (grant permitting) to deliver a large proportion of the professional learning activity, where appropriate virtually.
- 5.12 All Caerphilly schools will continue to be provided with a bespoke support package that compliments the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs) in line with the levels of support they require. There is a degree of flexibility within the deployment model to allow for in-year changes in circumstances and to allow for changes in light of the pandemic.
- 5.13 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.
- 5.14 The talent and expertise that resides in schools 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 to offer

support beyond their own settings because of the pandemic, this situation will be managed with sensitivity and will be constantly reviewed.

5.15 For sustained school improvement to happen it is essential that all partners work together more closely than ever recognising that each partner (school, LA and EAS) has its role to play in providing support to secure improvements.

5.16 The Business Plan is in the consultation process. The draft business plan was created following feedback provided in a broad range of 'Visioning Sessions'. These virtual and physical meetings were offered to a range of stakeholder groups including, headteachers, governors and elected member. Feedback has been incorporated within the plan.

5.17 In addition the specific list of consultees are noted 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)

5.18 The final version of the Business Plan will be supported by a range of supporting documents:

- Detailed Business Plan 2022–2023
- Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2022–2023 (to follow once detailed received from WG)
- Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
- EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
- Regional Professional Learning Offer 2022–2023
- Local Authority Strategic Education Plans

5.19 This approach begins with asking why we are doing what we do in the EAS (our vision) and reinforces the need for the development of a collective regional vision, so that we are all clear about what we are trying to achieve and each other's respective roles in this. The EAS will work collaboratively with local authority partners, wider partners and schools and educational settings to implement the Business Plan.

South East Wales Vision 2025

5.21 All young people are confident, ambitious, resilient and have a love of lifelong learning and realise their full potential. (The SE Wales Vision is currently under development)

EAS Vision 2025

- 5.22 Working in partnership with LAs supporting and enabling schools and education settings to thrive as effective learning organisations. (*There is an existing vision that is currently under development with all stakeholders*).

What? What will the EAS do to achieve our vision?

- 5.23 High Level Business Plan activities are aligned to Caerphilly Education Plan priorities. All Caerphilly schools will be able to access a universal offer of professional learning support in each of the following areas: School Improvement, Leadership and Teaching, Curriculum for Wales, Health Wellbeing and Equity and School Governors which are intrinsically linked. As well as a holistic professional learning offer, this will include a set number of days to work with their School Improvement Partner (SIP) and a professional dialogue with the EAS and Caerphilly LA to agree and or amend improvement priorities and support requirements as part of an annual professional discussion.
- 5.24 In addition to the universal offer, schools will be able to access specific and targeted support as determined through ongoing professional discussion with their SIP and in line with their school improvement priorities. This professional learning support may be related to a task and finish activity, an option for further work with their SIP or an option for peer working.
- 5.25 Bespoke support will also be available for Caerphilly schools who require more intensive support. This could include more support from the SIP or the use of a Learning Network School to School Partnership.
- **School Improvement:** Bespoke support to schools and settings aligned to need. Create and facilitate collaborative networks of professional practice.
 - **Leadership and teaching:** Professional learning and support for the development of leadership and teaching across the entire workforce.
 - **Curriculum for Wales:** Professional learning and support for Curriculum for Wales.
 - **Health, Wellbeing and Equity:** Professional learning and support for health, wellbeing, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
 - **Governors:** Provide a broad range of professional learning and support for Governors.

These high-level activities are explained in detail in the full Business Plan, and will be delivered, through the EAS annual Detailed Delivery plans. The progress towards them will be regularly reported to EAS Governance groups and Caerphilly LA Officers.

What are the foundations that enable activities to take place?

- 5.26 The EAS needs to have the following elements in place to enable the activities above. These are the foundations of the organisation:
- Agile, timely and responsive.
 - Sensitive, flexible, and empathetic to system needs.
 - The way we work is informed, drawing on research from a global perspective.
 - Welcome challenge and review.

- Effective systems and processes for self-evaluation, risk, and financial management.
- The operation of a clear and effective governance model.
- Positive relationships with a range of partners and stakeholders.
- Adherence to all legislative requirements.
- Communicate clearly.
- Support the wellbeing and professional learning of staff.
- Work is well-planned and managed to deliver the best for schools and education settings.
- Draw upon expertise to improve our delivery.
- Passionately committed to Wales, helping our staff, schools and education settings succeed.

What will be the impact?

5.27 If schools and educational settings have the capacity to secure improvement and engage with the support available from the EAS this is the expected impact:

- The EAS supports and enables leaders, governors and practitioners to develop knowledge, skills, behaviours that impacts positively on practice and improved learner outcomes.
- Professional learning is of high quality and pertinent to need.
- Support is aligned to need enabling schools and settings to make progress
- The broad range of collaborative networks and activity support the development of a self-improving system.

How will we capture our work and share information with our partners?

5.28 There are many ways of capturing and sharing what the EAS does which are exemplified in this model as outputs.

- EAS Website
- Regional policies and processes
- Case studies
- Regional meeting minutes
- External research and review
- Impact capture reports
- Supporting Our Schools Site
- Partnership documentation
- Professional learning resources and guidance

How will we capture our work and share information with our partners?

5.29 There are many ways of capturing and sharing what the EAS does which are exemplified in this model as outputs. The progress on the implementation and impact of the Business Plan will be reported to the Joint Executive Group and Company Board. 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 approach will be aligned to the national changes in the accountability system.

- 5.30 We will continue to report on progress towards success criteria in a variety of ways, including:
- Monthly Partnership Meetings
 - Termly Overviews
 - Case studies
 - Scrutiny Reports, bespoke to LAs
 - EAS Governance Reports
- 5.31 In addition, in order to provide a clear narrative for schools' progress, the EAS will, report in addition to the case studies a succinct impact report focusing on the theme of key 'Stats and Stories' and the progress towards meeting success criteria.

Conclusion

- 5.32 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan on an annual basis. This report asks for members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan as part of the regional consultation process.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1. In writing this plan we have made the following assumptions. If these are not in place, then they become a risk to the successful delivery of this plan.
- Operate with integrity, honesty and objectivity.
 - Partners understand our role in the education system.
 - Professional learning has a positive impact on practice and behaviour.
 - We are one part of the much wider system.
 - Schools / education settings positively engage with us.
 - Schools / education settings use funding effectively.
 - We have the capacity and resources to undertake our activity effectively.
 - When the conditions in a school / education setting can secure improvement, readiness for support results in positive change.
 - Our partners provide us with timely and appropriate information.
 - We work with schools / education settings to ensure priorities for improvement are based on robust, accurate self-evaluation.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report is for information and consultation, however an EAS Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This must take a long term view as part of its impact on life chances, employment and quality of life. Causes within attainment are complex although one of the main ones is deprivation. The measure that is commonly used to measure deprivation is a pupil's eligibility to receive Free School Meals. One of the Council's Well-being Objectives is to 'Improve outcomes for all learners but we want to particularly focus on those vulnerable to underachievement'.
- 7.2 Ensuring high quality education is fundamental to securing the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of future generations. The Business Plan focuses support for all schools appropriately schools. The school curriculum includes focus on social,

environmental and cultural well-being, and these aspects are support as part of the plan. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.

- 7.3 The EAS have their own Equalities and Welsh Language plans in place. CCBC has therefore not undertaken any specific impact assessment on the EAS Business Plan. The EAS Welsh Language Policy (Updated September 2021) describes in full the ways in which the EAS complies with the Welsh Language Measure (2015), including accesses to all materials bilingually, actively promotes the use of the language and offers an ever a range of services and support through the medium of Welsh for those who require them.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Section 4 of the Business Plan details the EAS activities for 2022-2023 and Section 5 details the governance and financial arrangements. Indicative LA Core Contributions have been added into this section. The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by the Articles of Association and a Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA). These governance documents essentially link the five Local Authorities to the EAS both operationally and through the commissioning of regional school improvement services.
- 8.2 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 this 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. As recipients of public funding, it is important that budgets are allocated and spent wisely. The EAS will continually strive to provide value for money through the optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes.
- 8.3 The delegation rate to schools increased to 95.5% in 2021/22, whilst the EAS staff profile has reduced by 53.1% since 2012.
- 8.4 The local authority's indicative core contribution for 2022/23 are as follows: Caerphilly LA's contribution for 2022/23 is £980,663 compared to £985,591 in 2021/23, £1,005,705 in 2020/21 and £1,021,020 in 2019/20.
- 8.5 At the time of writing this report, there is uncertainty with regards to the regional grant funding from WG for 2022/2023. As a result of the pandemic, it is likely that there will continue to be reductions in the regional grant profile. When the grant position has been confirmed the EAS detailed delivery plan will be updated accordingly.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The Business Plan is in the consultation process. The Consultees are noted 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)

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, Children's Act 2004, Standards and Framework Act 1998

Author: Debbie Hartevelde, Managing Director, Education Achievement Service

Consultees: In addition to the groups listed above
 Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
 Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
 Dave Street, Corporate Director, Social Services
 Councillor Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure
 Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
 Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
 Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer
 Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
 Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy
 Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion & ALN
 Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
 Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
 Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
 Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
 Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities, Welsh Language & Consultation)
 Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
 Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Officer.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Education Achievement Service: Regional Business Plan (Post Covid Recovery 2022-2025 (Consultation Version - Accessible)

Appendix 2 EAS Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment (FEIA)

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