

DRAFT CSC BUSINESS PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Central South Consortium: Future Business Plan framework

Purpose of this paper

In September 2013 the Consortium had been live for a year. Following a review of progress so far and the Hill Review and national task and finish group it was timely to review both the long-term direction of consortium working and the function and form of the consortium operation and structure.

Local authorities in the region have been keen to build a greater sense of system-wide leadership. Evidence shows this is led from the most effective and innovative schools who are supported to develop a more sustainable improvement culture for all schools in the region. Professor Mel Ainscow has been working with schools in the region to explore and develop this approach. This paper sets out the strategy for this school-led system and sets it in the context of the national model for consortia working.

All consortia have been asked to consider their function in response to the national model and provide a business case for approval by the Welsh government in February. The national model document is attached for information. The proposals within this document are largely in line with the national model and will set out where they may deviate slightly.

In conclusion this document proposes a number of recommendations. It would be helpful if the Joint Committee could consider these recommendations and provide a view. This view will form the basis for the development of the business case to meet the Welsh Government's deadlines.

It will also set out the principles which will underpin a restructure of the consortium in order to bring the organisation into line with the national model and the long-term direction of travel. This detailed restructure will be subject to further consultation including full consultation with the Trade unions.

This paper reviews all aspects of consortium working and describes how the organisation will function.

- **Section One: The vision and strategy**
- **Section Two: Governance**
- **Section Three: How the consortium organisation itself will be structured in the medium term**
- **Section Four: Funding**
- **Section Five: Performance management.**

The paper sets out recommendations at the end of each draft section.

Section 1: Draft vision and commissioning plan for Central south region.

What are the issues for school improvement in Central South?

Central South region covers a populous and economically significant region of Wales. Thirty percent of Wales's children are educated in the region and the region includes the capital city and the communities which feed the most productive economic industries along Wales' south coast.

There are 417 schools in the region, 325 primary, 60 secondary, 17 special schools, 6 Pupil referral units and a small number of maintained nurseries. Nearly one in four children in the region claims free school meals.

The region is diverse. Local authorities differ in size and resources, and significantly so in social and economic challenges. Communities predominantly in the north of the region, in the valleys of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and Merthyr experience significant disadvantage, whilst there are also urban pockets of significant deprivation in Cardiff, the Vale and Bridgend.

Standards have risen slightly in 2013 at every key stage and every Local authority, but the improvement is incremental. Improvement was faster than the Welsh average at L2+, but remains below it at KS2 and L2+. The challenges of underperformance dominate and are particularly evident in higher performing schools which have shown some slipping back in standards in recent years.

Capacity for improvement has been judged as only adequate across the region by Estyn. All five authorities are in some category of follow up ranging from adequate through to special measures and nearly half of schools inspected since 2010 are in a follow up category. Of the consortium's own categorisation process which has been agreed with each LA, only 20% of schools are in the top outstanding category illustrating the limited amount of obvious capacity available in schools to be harnessed and used across the system.

Nearly 40% of schools in the region are in categories C and D which require significant improvement. This balance varies significantly between authorities and phases. Secondary schools perform much worse than the Welsh average whilst at primary on the whole, performance is slightly better. Typically the smaller authorities of Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend have more high performing schools that need to seek to sustain improvement and raise standards, whilst the larger authorities of Cardiff, RCT have a larger proportion of high-risk schools requiring more intensive intervention and support. Merthyr is in special measures with has chronically low standards, few schools in categories A and B and some high intensity improvement work taking place through the intervention board.

What is the vision for the school improvement in the region?

A vision for the schools in the five authorities across Central South which will include:

- Improved outcomes achieved by all children and young people in all schools, and the expectation that we close the gap between the most disadvantaged children and their peers;
- Capacity and leadership for improvement rests within schools in the region who must lead the system of improvement; and

- Local and regional arrangements should create the conditions that enable schools to play the key role in building capacity in the system as a whole to improve.

In order to achieve this, the region needs to be one in which

- Schools' leaders share a strong sense of responsibility, not only for the interests of their own learners, but also for the success of all learners across the system as a whole;
- Schools' leaders play a full part in determining future direction and priorities and so form the basis of the future design of the regional arrangements;
- There is a focus on high quality in our school improvement services and the staff that work with schools;
- There is a clear definition of the role of the local authority of the future, particularly in respect of its statutory responsibility for education and so too that of the Consortium; and
- There is evidence that the arrangements taken together add value by improving learners' achievement.

Over the next three to five years moving to a fully school-led system will involve every significant cultural change from all parts of the system in order to build the capacity, confidence and behaviours of schools to lead improvement.

This must be managed whilst also maintaining a focus on impact including through direct intervention and challenge where necessary. Moving to this model will mean:

- Schools will need to feel enabled to design and lead a system of collaborative challenge and support, will feel trusted and supported to do this through high quality brokerage and will have the resources to build capacity to share across the system.
- Local authorities will support the development of the school-led system and refocus their resources and levers in support of a system-wide approach. They remain responsible for outcomes, for the provision of places, for intervention in schools that are failing and for the support provided and achievement of vulnerable groups in particular. Local authorities are the commissioning body for the consortium, they will need to be clear about where the consortium should deliver against local needs and hold the school improvement service to account.
- The Consortium will need to enable schools to step into a leadership function and facilitate rather than lead school to school capacity building. They will need to provide high quality analytical data and intelligence support and help the development of behaviours and understanding of data in a culture of mutual challenge and development of joint practice. At the same time the Consortium's staff will need to diagnose need accurately and well with headteachers and the local authority and provide high quality challenge, intervention and fast, well- targeted support in proportion to need. The Consortium will need to manage resources across the system to provide high value services and will need to provide good reporting systems on performance and activity information for each local authority.

What will success look like for the consortium in 2014/15?

In 14/15 the commissioning expectations of the consortium could include:

- Knowing schools really well through really effective data and intelligence on progress and contextual data at all levels including by local authority which can be used across the system including to inform local authority business plans and service level agreements;

- Providing high quality challenge, intervention and support through a challenge/advice function which works alongside heads to deliver fast and effective improvement within and across schools;
- Access to really good support to lever into schools at pace where a need has been identified;
- Good implementation of effective system-wide approaches to improvement including a region-wide leadership strategy, a high quality framework for improving teaching and learning, support for the Literacy and Numeracy Framework, high quality 14-19 education which engages all young people, good Foundation Phase and Welsh in education provision..

Success by the end of the 14/15 academic year would mean:

- All schools will work together in families from across the region, and which provide a context for creative thinking, sharp and disciplined challenge and high quality support.
- The most effective headteachers/ senior leaders/ practitioners will play a more prominent part in providing both challenge but also the capacity building support needed to effect change and improvement.
- A slimmer central service with fewer professionals providing the challenge and support function on a full-time basis.
- The consortium will provide, analyse and make effective use of data and intelligence on behalf of all local authorities to inform strengths and weaknesses and the identification of collective priorities, as well as priorities that are particular to individual authorities.
- Robust and live, in-year data will be in use relating to pupils' progress; evidence about pupils' progress will be the most significant element informing judgements about standards and those aspects of learning and teaching that need improvement.
- Teachers will have access to highly quality programmes involving largely classroom-based professional development; increasing numbers of teachers will benefit from the programmes; teaching will reach at least a good quality consistently across the system.
- Lead practitioners will work within and beyond their own school to provide support.
- Effective headteachers will have a prominent role in the development of leadership programmes that will build the capacity and impact of senior and middle leadership, support succession planning and the exercise of leadership across more than one school.
- School-to-school support and the role of the most effective practitioners will be much more prominent in the implementation of national and regional priorities such as those relating to literacy and numeracy and reducing the impact of poverty on attainment.

Specific outcomes by 2015 might look like:

1. A significant improvement in the performance at KS2 and L2+ of schools in categories C and D across the region by the summer of 2014.
2. A noticeable performance improvement in the average at KS2 and L2+ in every authority across the region which is greater than the improvement of the Welsh average on the previous year.
3. A [30%] reduction in schools in follow up or a category following Estyn inspection.
4. An improvement recognised in the support supplied to authorities' schools as set out in monitoring inspections.

5. A narrowing of the gap between children with FSM and their peers in every authority but particularly the authorities where the gap is widest.
6. A shift of in schools in the lowest banding across Wales towards the middle and those in the middle moving into the top bands, so that the consortium banding profiles reflect the national banding distribution.
7. The development of a school-led improvement strategy backed by resources which show an increased level of confidence and engagement in particular by heads who are recognised as outstanding by Estyn.
8. An improvement in the confidence and abilities of the Consortium's staff and value added as measured by the termly survey of all headteachers.

Recommendation:

1. **That Members comment on the vision for the region in the longer term and the commissioning expectations for consortium delivery in 14/15. These will form the basis of the commissioning plan at the front of the business case.**

Section 2: DRAFT Governance and Commissioning framework for Central South Consortium

Background

CSC is a joint service commissioned by five LAs in the central south region namely:

- Rhondda-Cynon-Taff
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Cardiff
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Bridgend

The formation of the Central South consortium (CSC) represents an ambitious step in the collaboration and delivery of education in Wales. These authorities have had some previous success in delivering education services in Wales. However, at the formation of the CSC there were significant challenges remaining, not least the region's underperformance at all key stages against the Welsh average, and significant over representation of schools in the lower bands of schools in the school banding information published by the Welsh Government's Standards Unit.

Progress to 2012 was not fast enough and in 2013, whilst some improvements have been shown, they need to be significantly more marked. A transformation is needed. The long-term ambition is to work alongside schools across the region to enable headteachers to lead the development of capacity within and across schools to develop and share practice, increase opportunities for constructive challenge and disciplined support.

As they move towards this model, partners in the CSC are keen to focus on proposals to enable them to work together as part of one integrated service to enhance front line services, build capacity and continue the drive towards improvement through a strong and straightforward challenge and support model which makes the most of available resources.

The five CSC local authorities have said that from 2014 onwards the new service must deliver significant and sustained improvements including improvement in schools' banding positions, in literacy and numeracy, in performance against the level 2+ threshold and in closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils.

Principles

- The service works for and on behalf of the five authorities and their schools who commission jointly with the aim of developing a strong and leading schooling improvement model which improves standards in schools within the five local authorities.
- The long-term aim of the consortium is to hand over responsibility and leadership for system-wide school improvement to schools in the region to be organised to meet the stipulations of the regulators and inspectorates, with facilitation provided by a smaller consortium staff workforce.
- The Joint Committee is responsible for agreeing the business plan and for holding the Executive Board and Managing Director to account.
- The existence of CSC as a service serving five councils does not remove the primary responsibility for providing education for its learners from each individual council.

- The accountability, governance and commissioning arrangements need to ensure that each council has complete confidence that their statutory functions will be met as a result of the activity taking place on their behalf by CSC.
- The service engages with schools on behalf of the authority as defined in the commissioning agreement (reviewed annually), in response to schools and their individual needs and in response to the pre and post inspection needs of schools.
- Any changes in the strategic direction are taken by the Joint Commissioning Group. Change may be proposed by the Local Authorities or the CSC Joint Education Service. Operational management of the CSC rests with the Managing Director held to account by the Executive Board.
- Both Directors of Education and practitioners within the CSC will inform each other promptly about any issues or developments relevant to each school.
- The operational practice comprises of core activities which may be varied by local agreement as part of each annual commissioning plan to reflect the local authorities' needs and circumstances, recognising that this may incur additional costs.

Accountability

The Joint Committee

Legal responsibility for the CSC is held by the Joint Committee as delegated through the legal agreement agreed by each local authority's Cabinet.

The joint commissioning group is responsible for agreeing the business plan and budget, reviewing the performance of the service on behalf of the five local authorities. The Joint Commissioning Group meets every term to review progress.

Representatives on the Joint Commissioning group include:

- The Leader of each constituent Local Authority, or his/her delegated nominee – normally the Cabinet Member with responsibility for education;
- The lead Chief Officer for the region that year;
- The Managing Director of the Consortium;
- The Chair of the Executive Board of the Consortium.

Meetings of the Joint committee will be open to the public. Voting rights will be held only by Elected Members.

The Joint Commissioning group will be chaired by one of the Cabinet Members of the five Councils. The five authorities will appoint one member to the role of Chair for a period of 12 months from the date of appointment, rotated in a specific order. The consortium will provide secretariat to the Joint Commissioning group and deliver the services at no additional charge to the local authorities. . Agendas are agreed through dialogue between the Chair and the Managing Director of the Consortium.

The Executive Board

The Managing Director is appointed by, and accountable to, the Executive Board who reports to the Joint committee. The Executive Board is accountable for operational delivery of the organisation. The Executive Board will comprise:

- The Managing Director;
- A nominee of Welsh Government;

- The Lead Director of the consortium;
- A representative Cabinet Member from the Joint Committee who acts as champion in the region (who is not the Chair of the Joint Committee);
- [Five] external experts nominated from a pool agreed with Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government one of whom is a serving headteacher from the region;

One of the external experts chairs the Executive Board. The executive board will have delegated responsibility for the implementation of strategy, business planning, budget, performance, risk and remuneration and appointment of the Managing Director and senior team.

Steering groups

The senior management team of the consortium will be advised in its development of strategy and operational practice by three groups:

- The Directors' group will meet fortnightly as part of their commitment to ensure that agreed operational protocols are in place, with the overall aim of efficient delivery of service across the region. The Directors' group will be chaired by a Lead Director who will set the agenda. This role will rotate on an annual basis.
- The headteachers' group will meet each half term time to consider the work of the Consortium. It will consist of headteachers nominated to represent their own local authority. The headteachers' group will consist of a headteacher per sector for each authority. The group will be chaired by a nominated Headteacher which may again revolve as agreed amongst the group.
- A governors' group which also meets each half term to consider the work of the Consortium. It will also operate with a representative per sector and per local authority and will be chaired by a nominated governor.

The Managing Director will attend and report to each group seeking their views on strategy, operational practice and performance. The outcomes from these groups will be reported to the Executive Board and formally in the business plan.

Business plan and agreement

The strategic direction for the Consortium will be set through the agreement of the business plan by March. This will include:

- thorough contextual analysis of the summer's results, the initial findings of the system leader's/challenge advisor's strategic conversation with each school;
- a thorough review of progress and performance;
- latest policy expectations;
- Proposals about deliverables during the year and expected outcomes as a result;
- a submission from each local authority setting out the strategic priorities of the authority, demand and need analysis and performance/quality expectations; and
- affordability from the revenue expectations of local authorities and the Welsh Government for the future financial year.

The business plan will be published by March each year and will set the budget expectations for the following financial year.

Should any functions be significantly changed (i.e. position of the traded services) or new functions be commissioned from local authorities to the CSC within year, clear plans for the

delivery of these against budget will be required to come to the Joint Commissioning Group for agreement.

New strategies which are not contained in the commissioning plan, or development of significant detail or changed budget proposals will also require the approval of the Joint Commissioning Group.

Hosted arrangement

The consortium is hosted by one authority – RCT – for the purposes of an employing authority and provision of back office functions (HR, finance, legal and IT). The legal agreement sets out the financial agreements that the host may enter into for the provision of services in the delivery of host functions. All staff will be employed under RCT terms and conditions and the main operating procedures (HR, procurement, contract procedure) belong to that of the host.

Should the joint commissioning body wish to change the status of the organisation away from a hosted model, it would require a new legal agreement with independent legal advice.

Scrutiny

The Managing Director of the Consortium will be expected to provide a report to each Scrutiny committee of each local authority on the performance and budgetary position of the Consortium and the future business plan proposals. This would ideally take place in the autumn term to inform business planning.

Funding arrangements

The CSC is funded by the five member local authorities and the funding model is based on the number of schools within each local authority, the level of service demand and the agreed categorisation of schools within the region. The model allows for an element of 'pooling' within the service in order to provide the scale to deliver a high quality effective service model. All five authorities have made a commitment to work together in this way for the long term. The funding for the model of delivery will be agreed as set out above as part of the overall commissioning plan for the financial year ahead. The operational costs of the service are met from a combination of services commissioned by each local authority, and services commissioned by schools. The financial contribution of each local authority will be set out in separate service level agreement. .

The Managing Director of the Consortium is responsible for the provision of financial reports to the Executive Board and Joint Committee which provide financial information to inform decision making and will be supported to do so by the finance function of the host authority through a service level agreement. .

Through the legal agreement the host authority is the banker organisation for the consortium. As such the host authority also carries out Section 151 responsibilities for the consortium and provides financial auditing and assurance.

Legal basis

The accountability framework for the Consortium is underpinned by a legal agreement between the five Cabinets. This legal agreement provides the delegated authority to the joint commissioning group and through them, the Managing Director, for the operation of the Consortium.

The new governance model will require the current legal agreement to be changed. The changes are not significant but material enough. Principal changes will include:

- Membership and functions of the Joint Commissioning group
- The Executive Board and its responsibilities
- The commissioning framework's proposals enabling local authorities to set out their own commissioning intentions and the development of a single commissioning plan for the Consortium.
- Revenue funding proposals to be (potentially) agreed through an annual service level agreement with each authority and not mandated in the legal agreement.
- Section 151 officer responsibilities
- Any new functions which are not included within the commission plan.

Recommendations on Governance:

- 1. That legal responsibility for the Central South Consortium rests with the Joint Committee CSC, and that the Joint Committee meets termly with a focus on the Consortium's business plan, budget and performance;**
- 2. That membership of the Joint Committee consists of Leaders from each local authority (with the normal powers to delegate as appropriate), with support from a lead Chief Executive for the region;**
- 3. That there remains a lead Chief Executive for the region and a Lead Director who come from different authorities and that both roles rotate every 12 months;**
- 4. That an Executive Board is agreed for the Consortium and membership is sought from the 'approved pool' and that the Executive Board starts to meet in shadow form in early January;**
- 5. That local authorities will jointly commission the consortium through a business plan which will set out a summary of performance; the priorities for improvement, work programmes and functions to be undertaken in the 14/15 year, supported by budget costings; and the measurable improvement in schools' performance to be achieved over the 12 months. That this is provided to the Welsh Government by the end of February;**
- 6. That local authority annexes are agreed to the same timescale, there will be a named senior challenge advisor for each local authority who will be responsible for delivering this commissioning agreement and be held accountable for it and that each director will meet with the senior management team of the Consortium to review progress in each local authority and agree their business plan annex;**
- 7. That Directors of Education continue to provide a steering group function meeting regularly with the Managing Director and rotate the lead Director role annually;**
- 8. That the advisory panels of schools and governors are set up to include heads and governors who are nominated by each local authority as per the national model and who are responsible for communicating with the wider body of heads as well as feeding in views;**

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9. That there is no joint scrutiny function but that the Managing Director of the Consortium provides a report to each local authority's Scrutiny Committee annually and attends a meeting if required;
10. That the Consortium continues to operate under a hosted model, but that the Joint Committee commissions an independent review within the 14/15 financial year of the pros and cons of a hosted model, alongside the development of a school-led system and a move towards a traded function led by schools;
11. That funding arrangements operate through a service level agreement between local authorities and the consortium, with monthly budget briefings supplied to the Executive Board;
12. That a new legal agreement is drawn up to represent the changes as set out above, but which also considers the structural recommendations for the shape of the Consortium, including bringing the LINKs and SIS functions together under one governance and legal agreement.

Section 3: Recommendations for the function and form of the Consortium

The Joint Education Service currently comprises the separately governed parts of the School Improvement Service (SIS) and LINKS. Typically the SIS leads the challenge function; LINKS commissions, brokers and provides the support function.

The Joint Education Service was set up in the spring of 2012 for operation by September 2012. The process was carried out very quickly and in the process it is acknowledged that there was insufficient focus on quality and the core function of the organisation. In addition, the organisation was established in two separate parts which, a feature that worked against the need for a coherent, interdependent organisation.

The longer term vision for the organisation is to move the point of gravity of school improvement back to schools – so that schools can design and lead the school improvement functions which will best enable them to develop an improvement culture across the region. This will take time and will require schools to develop capacity and behaviours to lead the system.

There will remain functions for a Consortium's back office and challenge and facilitation function whilst a school-led system is in development and in place. In the meantime, in line with the national model in the future there will be six main areas relating to the Consortium's function:

1. An **enhanced data and intelligence function** which sets both the strategic commissioning agenda, but also produces the progress and in-year data for schools to use within their self-evaluation
2. A **senior challenge advisor** linked to each local authority who is responsible for quality and impact on behalf of that local authority
3. A **slimmer and higher quality challenge advisor workforce** which is more directly accountable for progress in high risk schools
4. A **strategic commissioning function which is responsible for** the development of system-wide approaches to improvement across the region and for the development of a menu of support which can be brokered into schools in line with identified need
5. If the case can be made, a small **provider unit** which is available to provide direct provision where it is clear it makes sense to do so

1. The intelligence, data and quality unit

It is proposed that a larger intelligence, data and quality unit is established for the use of challenge advisors, local authorities and commissioning staff.

This unit should be responsible for the strategic development of data and intelligence so that the consortium can be proactive in its assessment of the strength of the region, of local authorities and of schools to enable partners and system leaders to be better able to design strategic responses to meet needs. This includes the collection and analysis of performance data at all levels including progress at the level of subjects and individual pupils and value added data. It will include the production and analysis of live in- year data about progress, comparative data about specific groups of pupils and wider information about pupils including behaviour, attendance, those not in education, employment or training and inclusion information to inform the analysis at all levels. The unit will manage the system for collating schools' statutory pupil target setting and provide analyses and information as well

as wider information about inspection outcomes and analyses of progress in schools in categories, improvement trajectories and progress reports. The unit will maintain excellent systems for the collation and sharing of information for use in improving the quality of the conversations with schools and local authorities.

This unit will also be responsible for the collation and production of information about performance within the organisation including activity data, performance and quality information and will undertake regular surveys and stocktakes of impact of the service with and across stakeholders.

2. The senior challenge adviser

There will be five senior system leaders, one for each local authority. The senior system leader (SSL) is a critical senior leader within the organisation who is responsible for the quality of work in their partner local authority. The SSL will lead on the performance expectations and commissioning agreement with each local authority and be accountable for the confidence of that local authority in the work of the consortium as a whole. They will work closely with the designated lead commissioning officer of the local authority to:

- lead the provision of the school improvement service commissioned by the local authority to which s/he is attached;
- line manage, oversee and quality assure the work of an agreed number of challenge advisers and manage their performance;
- develop a secure knowledge of the performance of the schools in the local authority to which s/he is attached, the local authority's context, issues and priorities; and
- be accountable for the progress of the schools in each local authority, the performance review, delivery of statement of action and effectiveness of the support which has been commissioned.

3. The challenge adviser

We propose a reduced number of high calibre 'challenge advisers' to replace the 'system leader' function. Whilst there remains a very minimal statutory function in all schools, this role will focus more sharply on the schools which are most vulnerable and will be accountable for their progress working with the headteacher and governing body. The role will operate in a more facilitative, accountable manner which gets behind the efforts of the high risk schools, provides high quality analysis of data, enables the delivery of a plan of action and is responsible for getting high quality support into schools quickly and efficiently.

From 2014 we would hope to deploy the challenge advisers to a family of schools in a facilitative role, providing challenge, high quality data and getting the right support into place.

For schools where performance is strongest (category A and B), the main focus of the contact with the school will be annually in the autumn term and on those occasions when contributing to headteachers' performance management.

For higher risk schools – those in C and D categories normally, the challenge advisor will:

- make sharp and effective analysis and use of data at whole-school and subject/ area of learning levels, including comparative data and data about the progress of individual pupils;
- support the headteacher to evaluate the performance of each school at least annually, the impact of leadership on outcomes, the capacity to improve and the appropriateness

of the school's improvement priorities and the strategies to achieve them. This will lead to the categorisation;

- support the headteacher to ensure that those aspects of the school's work that need to improve are diagnosed accurately and precisely drawing on other expertise to achieve this as required and to agree challenging targets that reflect high expectations;.
- be responsible for agreeing with the school's leaders an intervention plan that will meet the identified needs;
- broker the required support and expertise working with the commissioning unit, ensuring that only support of the highest quality is employed;
- support the headteacher and senior leaders to ensure that the conditions are created within the school that give the support maximum opportunity to succeed and to ensure the evidence of impact/reporting of progress;
- monitor progress regularly (monthly or fortnightly);
- be accountable within the school improvement service for the effectiveness of the intervention overall and its impact on securing progress as set out in the plan; and
- make recommendations to the local authority in cases where the capacity of the school's senior leaders and/ or governing body is unsatisfactory or where progress has been insufficient.

Whilst the funding system will operate on the principle of maximum delegation to schools, challenge advisers will hold a small budget which can be deployed per school to enable the swift delivery of support or to facilitate match funding from the school to build the capacity for improvement.

4. The commissioning of support to schools in Central South Consortium

It is important that support is commissioned and supplied to schools in response to the swift diagnosis of challenge advisors. To this end we will develop a commissioning unit which contains a small group of specialist commissioners. They will each scan the needs analysis for the region and the market to provide a menu of commissioned support for schools in the region which is differentiated by need.

Increasingly the aspiration will be for schools to develop and lead this capacity but the commissioners will also engage with and develop procurement frameworks with other providers across the region and further afield. Only where there is little high quality provision in the marketplace and the consortium has expertise will staff be required to facilitate or deliver support directly.

The commissioning and support team will include an expert in each national priority area of literacy, numeracy, teaching and learning, leadership and poverty as well as in Welsh, emerging technologies, the Foundation Phase and 14-19 Education.

The commissioning team will develop proposals for universal strategy development as well as specific bespoke support to meet the needs of schools. They will lead on the development of a leadership strategy, a teaching and learning framework for all schools, the implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and wider national programmes which are to be delivered across all schools.

Schools in CSC will be able to access support that will;

- include professionals learning from and with their peers through school-to-school working;

- be rooted in practice that has a clear impact on outcomes and will build on the effective practice that is already in schools;
- be based on evidence, including research, of leading edge approaches to school improvement which have a track record of improving outcomes; and
- build capacity in schools for ongoing improvement and contribute to driving forward improvements in the system as a whole.

A clear quality assurance process

There will be a quality assurance process which is led by schools through which all business plans must pass and each business unit will provide up to date detailed information about provision of support and impact linked to the challenge advisor reporting process.

The team will be flexible and agile and will be responsive to the changing nature of support needs and capacity for school to school support in the region. The team will also need to be responsive to changing funding arrangements.

The role of the commissioning and support team will be:

- to respond to the strategic overview of the support needs of schools in CSC to ensure that schools are able to access a range of proven school improvement activities and classroom based support;
- to provide an agile and swift response to the identification of support needs and ensure that there is good access to appropriate support, including that which is brokered from schools;
- to hold excellent intelligence about the location of effective practice and to work with families of schools and challenge advisers to facilitate the dissemination of effective practice;
- to provide access to high quality, high impact improvement programmes commissioned from providers with a strong track record of success;
- to work with schools and teachers to embed a model of collaborative professional learning that through enquiry, evidence, action-based research and evaluation enables professionals to become reflective practitioners;
- to liaise with national initiatives introduced by Welsh Government in order to secure strong engagement from the region resulting in increased capacity for the adoption of successful approaches;
- to establish sound working relationships with a broad range of partners including commercial organisations and the third sector to ensure that support provided by them in CSC is responsive to local and national contexts, ensuring that providers, particularly those who are new to the region or to Wales, understand the context of the region and are able to tailor their support to reflect local and national need and ways of working;

- to build strong relationships with providers of Higher and Further Education , particularly where they are able to contribute to the provision of accredited professional learning programmes which are school based or provide support for research projects based in schools;
- to seek feedback from schools in a systematic way in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the commissioning process and the quality of the service provided;
- To ensure sustainability of outcomes of the support by planning strategically for the most effective use of funding.

No direct provision for schools unless a clear gap in the market

The commissioning service will not provide direct support to schools except where there is a grant funded requirement, or where an external provider cannot be found and there is a need to provide support for schools with a specific need. This will need to pass through the quality assurance process before it is delivered.

All commissioners will be base funded and whilst they will respond to the commissioning requirements of all schools and provide services to meet needs, this will not generate income for the consortium or partner schools.

Should there be a small provider team, they will generate income, but will be only those who are grant funded and impact of their work will be kept under review. Over time there is potential for a provider function to grow and develop outside of the organisation as a mutual or community interest company, but it is judged that the consortium does not have the capacity to support such a function at present and will commission in bulk from other providers for the majority of its support.

A strong interface between challenge and commissioning

Critical to the effective operation of one service is a strong and central interface which holds excellent record keeping systems at school level for the region. This operational management function will ensure that the information required and supplied by challenge advisors is clearly recorded and used efficiently to commission the right support and evaluate progress at a system level effectively.

Recommendations on the Model of School Improvement:

Vision and strategy

- 1. The Joint Education Service is currently organised in two sections – the school improvement service and the LiNKS service that is provided in response to commissioned work for schools and other clients. From April 2014 there should be one service designated as a school improvement service.**
- 2. Schools will work together to lead a school to school system of improvement across the region. In practice this will start by developing clusters with other schools with differing outcomes and capacity. Challenge advisors will be deployed around these clusters and increasingly schools will support each other with joint practice development against their school improvement plan.**
- 3. Until such a system is more mature, and remaining alongside the mature school led system, there will be a slim enabling challenge and support process which is targeted sharply at schools with low capacity for improvement.**

Challenge advisors

- 4. The term system leader will be dropped to be replaced by an alternative.**
- 5. There will be a senior challenge advisor responsible for the interface with the local authority and who will be accountable internally for the educational performance of schools within that authority in line with the agreed local commissioning statement.**
- 6. There will be fewer challenge advisors and their number will reduce over time. They will operate within the long term vision of moving towards a school led system but will be deployed alongside high risk schools predominantly whilst also providing statutory performance management of Heads function for all schools.**
- 7. The performance objectives of challenge advisors will be linked to the progress of the schools that they work with.**
- 8. [subject to final budget position. That challenge advisors will hold a budget for schools in categories C and D which they can deploy to facilitate match funding or to enable the swift delivery of support systems as required];**
- 9. There should be an enhanced intelligence, quality and data function that operates on behalf of all local authorities and the consortium.**
- 10. The categorisation process will be brought in line with the national model.**

Commissioning, support and provision

- 11. The LiNKS brand will be dropped from April and the current staff will be subject to any agreed restructuring process into either a commissioning function or a small provision function;**

- 12. A small commissioning unit will focus on the identification and development of capacity building support from schools in the region and beyond, from the private sector, consultants and related sources of support.**
- 13. Commissioning will happen by subject specialism so there will be a lead commissioner for each of: literacy, numeracy, leadership, teaching and learning, ICT, poverty, Welsh and 14-19.**
- 14. Support commissioned by the unit will need to pass through a quality assurance process which is led by Heads.**
- 15. The challenge advisors will be responsible for the quality of the support and provision which is commissioned by the commissioning unit as well as how it is implemented within the school. Whilst the head is ultimately accountable, system leaders will be held accountable within the consortium for the delivery of the statement of action throughout the year and the progress made by the school;**
- 16. There will no longer be a 'strategic lead' role held by challenge advisors alongside their challenge advisor function.**
- 17. The consortium will seek to procure school improvement provision in the first instance through commissioning in bulk from existing providers.**
- 18. Over time there may be an appetite to grow an arms-length provider service for the region which is independent of the consortium and full traded. It is judged that the consortium does not, at present, have the capacity to support such a function to develop.**

Section Four: Funding

[To be completed when WG concludes the budget position for 14/15. Needs to set out budget, proposed areas of spend and process for monitoring and reporting on spend]

Section Five: Performance monitoring

The Consortium will agree a performance framework as part of its commissioning plan with the five local authorities. In addition it will agree a local performance agreement with each local authority. The performance frameworks will predominantly include outcome indicators and measurement of the gap in outcomes between children claiming free school meals and their peers, but it will also include in year measures such as the proportion of schools in Estyn categories and analysis of percentage of schools where leadership is a matter of concern. The performance framework will also report against proportions of children attending, excluded and not in education, employment or training as well as achievement by specific groups in each local authority including children in care and children with statements of special educational need.

The Joint Committee will receive an update on performance at its autumn meeting and each local authority will review performance through a termly stocktake with the senior challenge advisor and Managing Director.

Each school in category C and D will have a statement of action with clear objectives and deliverables. This will be monitored termly and a report produced for each local authority agreeing the capacity for improvement in each school.

The Executive Board will receive a performance and activity report at each meeting detailing activity against plan, funding position and in year progress measures to be agreed.

Section five: Performance Monitoring

- 1. That the performance framework is developed to reflect the performance expectations of the consortium in year, and reviewed with each local authority through the regular stock checks, with the Executive Board and with the Joint Committee annually.**