RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/21

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24th February 2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICE

ON THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM IN THE REGION AND RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL AUTHORITY APRIL 2019 - SEPTEMBER 2020

Author(s):- Steve Davies & Andy Hurley (Principal Improvement Partners, CSC)

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

   The purpose of this report is to update Members of the contribution of the Central South Consortium (CSC) in the region and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authority April 2019 – September 2020 to raising standards in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

   It is recommended that Members:

   2.1 Receive the content of Central South Consortium's report as outlined in Appendix A.

   2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

   2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in Central South Consortium's report.

3. **BACKGROUND**

   3.1 Since 2012, Central South Consortium has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 380[1] schools, 32% of Wales'

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   [1] *Source: School census results: as at January 2019*

children. It is a growing region with rapidly changing demographic encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic sub region. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty, with just under 1 in 5 children claiming free school meals.

3.2 The service delivers challenge and support on behalf of the five local authorities, governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each authority. The Joint Committee meets regularly and formally approves the annual business plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control.

3.3 Scrutiny Committees in each of the five authorities invite the Principle Improvement Partner/s attached to the authority to report on the performance of the schools and the contribution of the consortium at any stage during the year. An annual report from the consortium relating to progress in the previous academic year and priorities for the year ahead is also provided.

4. **UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION**

4.1 Please refer to the report provided in Appendix 1 for further information

5. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This is an information report. No Equality Impact Assessment screening form is required.

6. **CONSULTATION**

6.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

7.1 The cost of Central South Consortium's service to the Council is £982,311 for 2020/21 reducing to £972,488 for 2021/22.

8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS *OR* LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

8.1 None at present.

9. **LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP**

9.1 Educational performance has a clear link to the Council's priority of Building a Strong Economy. Improved educational performance will have a positive impact on this priority.

10. **<u>CONCLUSION</u>**

10.1 Central South Consortium's annual report provides an overview of the school improvement services it has provided on behalf of Rhondda Cynon Taf from April 2019 to September 2020.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
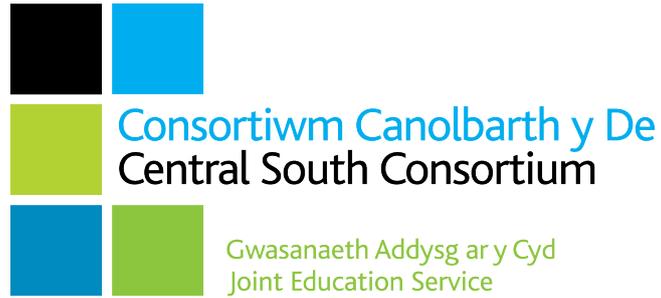
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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE

DATE: 24th of February 2021

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES**

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020 – 2021

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE		
		Report on the work of the Central South Consortium in the region and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authority April 2019 – September 2020
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES		

Author(s): - Steve Davies & Andy Hurley (Principal Improvement Partners)

Central South Consortium (Tel No. 01443 281400)

1

1.0   PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the work of the Central South Consortium (CSC) and to update Members with the contribution of the CSC, working in partnerships with the Local Authority (LA) to raise standards in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

2.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

2.1   Receive the content of this report.

2.2   Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

2.3   Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters considered within the report.

3.0   BACKGROUND

3.1   Since 2012, CSC has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five LAs: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 380[1] schools, 32% of Wales' children. It is a growing region, with rapidly changing demographic encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic subregion. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty, with just under 1 in 5 children claiming free school meals.

3.2   The service delivers challenge and support on behalf of the five LAs, governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each authority. The Joint Committee meets regularly and formally approves the annual Business Plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control.

3.3   This report details the work of the consortium for the academic year September 2019-2020 and the financial year April 2019-April 2020. The global pandemic caused schools to be repurposed in March 2020, requiring CSC to amend our approach to supporting schools.

4.0   CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2020

The consortium Business Plan for April 2019 to March 2020 can be found here. It has six priorities:
- Develop a high-quality education profession.
- Develop inspirational leaders to facilitate working collaboratively to raise standards.

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[1] *School census results: as at January 2019.*

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- Develop strong and inclusive schools committed to wellbeing, equity and excellence.
- Develop robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements, supporting self-improving systems.
- Provide professional learning (PL) opportunities to support the Curriculum for Wales (CfW).
- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of CSC.

4.1 The Business Plan sets out how we aim to deliver these priorities through effective school self-evaluation and improvement planning, underpinned by building capacity in schools to support other schools through the continued development of the 'Central South Wales Challenge'. This is led by schools and has involved the continued development of evidence-based strategies: school improvement groups (SIGs), school improvement hubs and peer engagement models, in which schools can be resourced to work together to share practice across the region.

4.2 Drive Teams made up from senior leaders from across the consortium ensure that the operational plans for each priority are implemented and that impact is measured. Half termly reviews including an impact review with the Managing Director at the end of each term ensures that monitoring is robust. Outcomes of this process are reported to Joint Committee, found here.

5.0   CSC BUSINESS PLAN PROGRESS HEADLINES

OBJECTIVE 1: TO DEVELOP A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION PROFESSION

- The Professional Learning Offer (PLO), aligned to NAPL, has been flexible and adaptive to regional and school needs in the context of reform.
- A total of 8,023 practitioners attended all PL events/ programmes offered by CSC April 2019-March 2020.
- 1,512 of attendees were from RCT schools, with 100% of schools attending at least three events/programmes across the CSC PLO. *NB. This is excluding the CfW summer 2019 events as booking data of individual participants is not available beyond the number of schools in each LA.*
- 784 school leaders and practitioners attended events/programmes facilitated by the CSC team, including 327 focused on equity and wellbeing and 115 on Welsh.
- 259 school leaders and practitioners attended events/programmes facilitated by hubs and lead practitioners.
- Practitioner response to the PL they engaged in was positive in nearly all cases. The practitioners were largely engaged and responded enthusiastically to the programmes. Nearly all participants considered that, as a result of attending the programmes, their practice had changed in some way. In the majority of cases, this change in practice has been to adapt at least one of the strategies and applied in their own context. Due to the way that training data was captured at that time, we are unable to provide a breakdown for this data for 2019/20 by LA. This has already been

3

recognised as an area for improvement and systems have been put in place to capture this going forward.

- 113 governors attended CSC PL for governors.
- A further 52 attendees at CSC PL events/programmes were RCT LA officers.

NB. For PL related to CfW please refer to 9.0, objective 5.

- 47 school leaders from RCT attended the PLA 'Culture of Enquiry' programme led by PLA hubs, with 100% attending the full programme. This was 21% of the attendees of the programme. Most participants agreed/strongly agreed that the programme developed their understanding of the enquiry process and on the important role it plays within school improvement systems and processes. The majority of delegates (63%) are now actively planning their own approach to enquiry as part of their strategic school improvement plans. Due to the way that evaluations during this cycle were owned by the person leading the PL (in this instance a network of 10 schools) and the evaluation form did not ask for the LA, we are unable to provide the percentage breakdown for each LA for 2019/20. However, this has already been recognised as an improvement for the evaluation process and all providers of PL now use a shared form that is managed by the CSC data team and includes a breakdown to LA to allow for this level of reporting.
- The CSC survey shows increased engagement and capacity in enquiry. A sampling framework ensures that the schools selected to take part in the survey reflect differences in pupil performance and students' socioeconomic background across the consortium, as indicated by e-FSM. Schools who take part in the surveys receive an analysis of their responses each January, containing comparisons with consortium averages. Schools are provided with a short booklet to help them use the data. From the survey we can say Engagement in collaborative research has seen a slight but positive increase over the last four years, to the point where 40% of staff in both sectors are engaged termly or more frequently in collaborative research currently. This positive trend mainly arises from the increased involvement of primary staff, up to 40% from 27%. Secondary staff involvement has also increased, less sharply but from a higher baseline, from 34% to 40%. There was a significant trend for senior leaders in the primary sector to discuss relevant research findings with colleagues more frequently ($rho = 0.261$, $p=0.000$). Due to the sampling framework that is used in the region and the ethics with which the survey has been administered, it is not possible to disaggregate priority data by LA.
- Over 700 Teaching Assistants have successfully gained HLTA status since it was introduced, with 25 completing during 2019-2020. Of these, one was from RCT.
- 55 schools in CSC were successful in applying to become partner schools with the Open University following a national selection process, 16 of which are RCT schools. Ten of those were also successful in becoming Lead Schools, who will be funded to engage in the alternative routes strategically.
- There has been an increased focus on the promotion of informal and incidental Welsh in many schools as a result of the Siarter Iaith and Cymraeg Campus activity. This

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activity has increased in the number of schools awarded the Welsh Language Charter. The following RCT schools achieved the Siarter Iaith - Silver Award:

- o Ysgol Bronllwyn
- o Ysgol Llyn y Forwyn
- o Ysgol Bodringallt
- o Ysgol Ynyswen
- o Ysgol Castellau
- o Ysgol Evan James

The following schools achieved the Cymraeg Campus - Bronze Award:

- o Llanhari Primary
- o Llanharan Primary
- o Penygawsi Primary
- o Brynnau Primary
- o Cwmbach Primary
- o Hafod Primary
- o Aberdare Town CIW Primary
- o Hawthorn Primary
- o Gwaunmeisgyn Primary
- o Pontyclun Primary
- o Tonysguboriau Primary
- o Treorci Primary
- o Williamstown Primary
- o Oaklands Primary
- o Cwmlai Primary
- o Perthcelyn Primary

- Across the region there are 32 primary SIGS and 15 secondary SIGs. 86% of RCT schools are engaged in SIGs. RCT schools are represented in all primary and secondary SIGS and 10 SIG convenors are from RCT schools. Nearly all SIGs have identified a purposeful focus to support collaborative joint practice development. Proxy indicators of impact in increased learning and changes in behaviour have been demonstrated in midterm evaluations. 42% focused on pedagogy. 42% focused on provision. 8% focused on leadership. 42% show impact at learning level. 50% show changes in practitioners' behaviour. 8% show an impact on learner results. Due to COVID-19 and school workloads, only a mid-year evaluation was received as much of the collaborative work was paused while schools and leaders responded to immediate operational needs. SIGs report on the overall impact on the SIG as a collaborative group. The data listed above is from the mid-year evaluation by LA. This is of SIGs containing schools from that LA. The identified joint practice development opportunities are based in a worthwhile common need in nearly all cases. In nearly all SIGs, purposeful collaborative planning and co-construction is providing leaders and participants with ownership of the joint practice development. In nearly all cases, the work of the SIG is effectively facilitating professional dialogues around current and future practice.

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- Nearly all ALN Cluster Leads (95%+) attended the PL 'train the trainer' sessions, and most disseminated this within their cluster.
- In spring 2020, most schools in the region undertook a self-evaluation of their preparedness for the ALN Act, supported by their Improvement Partner (IP). Information was gathered on 100% schools in four LAs. In RCT LA, it was not possible for the IP to collect information in three schools. Across the region, 84% evaluated that their progress was at least Strong or better, 1% Limited, 13% Satisfactory and 1% Not Recorded. In RCT LA, 78% evaluated that their progress was at least Strong or better, 1% Limited, 18% Satisfactory and 3% Not Recorded.

6.0 OBJECTIVE 2: TO DEVELOP INSPIRATION LEADERS TO FACILITATE WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO RAISE STANDARDS

- Leadership pathway programmes currently developed are all in place: Middle Leader, Aspiring Head Teacher, Newly Appointed/Acting Head Teacher and Experienced Head Teacher. The programmes have all been endorsed: Aspiring Head Teacher and Middle leadership programmes were endorsed by NAEL June 2019. Newly Appointed/Acting Head Teacher and Experienced Head Teacher were endorsed previously.
- Middle Leaders:
  - 109 candidates currently undertaking the programme, of which 33 are from within RCT LA.
  - Original three cohorts of 27 English Medium and after an extended deadline 17 Welsh medium.
  - Additional 80 applicants received for ALNCO cohort. Following selection, 65 were successful and split into four cohorts. All cohorts facilitated by PLA schools in seven different venues across the region.
- Historical information:
  - 282 candidates (96 RCT) have gained NPQH in CSC since 2011.
  - 56% (57% RCT) have since gained a Head Teacher post. Candidates with the NPQH are gaining a position as Head Teacher after a number of years of holding the qualification.
  - There are 123 teachers (41 RCT) in CSC who currently hold the NPQH but are yet to gain a headship.
  - 45 (14 RCT) of these teachers have held the qualification for more than three years – 16% of candidates.
  - 44% (46% RCT) are in other posts – Delegate Head Teacher, Challenge advisors, retired etc (did not gain Head Teacher).
- All Governor e-learning modules are in place and launched, increasing the opportunity to engage with the training, as below. RCT Governors attended mostly in person to undertake training prior to lockdown.
  - New Governor Induction (launched September 2019): 24 Governors completed.
  - Understanding Data (launched September 2019): 32 Governors completed.
  - New Clerk Induction (launched September 2019): delivered by LA.
  - New Chair Induction (launched September 2019): 3 Governors completed.

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- o Effective Challenge & Support (launched May 2020): 5 Governors completed.
    - o Head Teacher Performance Management (launched May 2020): 3 Governors completed.
- Increased number of delegates (Governors) attending statutory training across the CSC region. This does not apply to RCT LA, where engagement decreased.
    - o Statutory Training September 2018-March 2019 – Total Governors trained 117.
    - o New Governor Induction: 63 Governors attended.
    - o Understanding Data: 44 Governors attended.
    - o New Chairperson induction: 1 Governors attended.
    - o New Clerk Training: Delivered by LA, not CSC
    - o Statutory Training September 2019-March 2020 – Total Governors trained 89.
    - o New Governor Induction: 46 Governors attended.
    - o Understanding Data: 31 Governors attended.
    - o New Chairperson induction: 12 Governors attended.
    - o New Clerk Training: delivered by LA, not CSC.
- All 'New and Acting Head Teacher programme' and 'NPQH' participants have been allocated a coach. 100% positive feedback from candidates at NPQH assessment centre regarding coaches.
- CSC school professionals won a number of awards including Head Teacher of the Year (Ysgol Ty Coch, RCT), Pupils' Award for Best Teacher (Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, RCT) and contribution to Welsh and others.

7.0 OBJECTIVE 3: TO DEVELOP STRONG AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS COMMITTEE TO EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND WELLBEING

- Strong and effective strategic wellbeing support has been provided across the five LAs throughout 2019-20. There is a clear and consistent approach to assisting schools and LAs in supporting vulnerable learners, which has included PL opportunities, developing and maintaining wellbeing assessment tools and fostering effective relationships with LA officers. Examples of the support provided include:
    - o Working with the ALN transformation lead to lead CSC schools through the transition.
    - o Providing PL opportunities for all staff linked to vulnerable learners, including playlists and training from external professionals.
    - o Dissemination of strategy documents linked to vulnerable learners.
    - o Providing high level summaries of PDG plans linked to OECD DAC evaluation criteria.
    - o Chairing of attendance, exclusion and EOTAS leads meetings.
- Meetings have been held to share good practice. There is agreement to commit to a project that looks at reducing exclusions across the Consortia. The project explored sharing documentation and good practice linked to exclusions but was hampered by COVID-19. Meetings continue and a common project is to be decided at the start of 2021.

- A project has been set up across the five LAs, looking at sharing good practice. The five LAs are also involved in working with Welsh Government (WG) to update documentation for supporting schools with good attendance. The project was to work with WG in examining the documentation for schools involving attendance. Two initial meetings were held, but due to COVID-19 this work was side-lined. The group is still meeting, with a project focus to be decided in early 2021.
- Following training, Improvement Partners (IPs) and Strategic Advisers (SA) are aware of the implications of the ALNET Act and now understand their role in supporting and challenging schools in preparedness for the Act. Two training sessions were held for IPs and SAs (May 2019 and January 2020) and supplementary written guidance was provided (February 2020) to support their work in schools. In doing so:
    o All IPs and SAs have a clear understanding of how they challenge and support whole-school ALN strategic developments.
    o All IPs and SAs have increased understanding of what needs to be in place to secure whole-school leadership for ALN Transformation.
    o All IPs have a joint understanding of what strategic improvements are necessary for schools to successfully prepare for ALN.
- 97% engagement from ALN cluster leads in ALN Transformation Lead led training. 85% engagement from schools in ALN cluster leads training. CSC middle leadership course extended to incorporate ALNCOs. 97% attendance of ALN cluster leads and 85% attendance of ALNCOs at ALN Cluster meetings on an RCT LA basis. The model of support for schools is based on cluster working where the ALN Cluster Leads meets with the ALN Transformation Lead, LA Inclusion Officers and CSC SAs twice a term. The ALN Cluster Leads then coordinate and lead their own cluster meetings with ALNCOs twice a term. The attendance of the ALN Cluster Leads is monitored by the CSC through a dedicated project officer. The attendance at cluster meetings is coordinated and monitored by the ALN Cluster Leads.
- All 61 clusters have submitted PDG LAC plans, 17 of which are in RCT LA. An evaluative report on these plans has been compiled. 59 plans submitted in total as one joint plan was submitted for the Aberdare/St John cluster and 1 joint plan was submitted for schools within another LA.
- PL has been very well received by staff during 2019-20. According to the evaluations, over 1,000 teachers have benefited positively from the training. 302 of these evaluations are from RCT LA. The cluster evaluations demonstrate that schools have benefited from the levelled CLA friendly schools training. This figure includes all participants including LA officers, CSC staff, out of region schools. The figures specifically for teachers within schools within the region is 894. This figure includes the Mental Health and PERMA conference but not the EEF literacy conference.
- There has been improved understanding of the RSE framework and associated pedagogy and T&L strategies to support embedding it in primary, secondary and special schools. A full report of the RSE programme that includes details of the pedagogy through case studies can be found here.

8.0 OBJECTIVE 4: TO CONTINUE TO DEVELOP ROBUST ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS SUPPORTING A SELF-IMPROVING SYSTEM

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- There has been the production of high-quality guidance material and support programmes, including sharing of practice. For example, schools tracking and assessment systems have been shared with the Joint Committee by Pontypridd High School, found here.
- Regional recommendations to LAs occur during the year regarding schools causing concern, raised from first-hand evidence gathered from CA meetings, SIFs and progress meeting, as per the protocols in the intervention strategy. Appropriate support plans are in place for all these schools and, where required, an LA statement of actions is completed. Four schools within RCT LA changed support colour in year. Cefn and Craig-Yr-Hesg (Red) and Penrhiwceibr (Amber) had increased support, whereas St Michael's (Yellow) changed to receive less support.

9.0 OBJECTIVE 5: TO SUPPORT ALL SCHOOLS WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL CURRICULUM

- Quality Improvement Pioneers (QIs) (formally known as Curriculum Pioneers) were in the final stages of writing the curriculum framework and guidance. QI schools from RCT: Abercynon Community Primary School, Brynnau Primary school, Y Pant Comprehensive School, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Olwg and Ysgol Nant Gwyn.
- Professional Learning Pioneers (PLPs) were engaged with enquiry through the NPEP project, working with Higher Education Institutes on their enquiry work. PLPs in RCT: Cardinal Newman RC High School and Y Pant Comprehensive School.
- CSC appointed Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE) Leads to support the regional PL for CfW:
  - Abercynon Primary School – Languages Literacy and Communication.
  - Brynnau Primary - Expressive Arts.

  This was then further expended to appoint Welsh Medium (WM) AOLE leads to ensure capacity in the regional to support WM schools in the realisation of CfW. RCT WM AoLE Leads:
  - Ysgol Evan James – Science and Technology.
  - Ysgol Garth Olwg – Expressive Arts.
  - Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Rhydywaun – Humanities.
  - Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwyncelyn – Language Literacy and Communications.
- In January 2020, CSC created and delivered an upskilling programme, bringing QIs and PLPs together over a course of six days to share what each had learned from the process, to undertake research and collaborative enquiry. This was to ensure that, regardless of the workstream they had been involved with to date, they all had sound knowledge and understanding of curriculum reform so they could be deployed to support clusters across the region. February/March 2020 pioneer leads co-constructed and facilitated middle leader AOLE briefings for practitioners, to which 50% of RCT schools attended.
- All schools are encouraged to complete the Schools as Learning Organisations survey to support them in identifying strengths and areas of need across their staff. 56 of RCT

had completed this by July 2020. IPs are supporting schools with conversations around progress, and they can broker to further bespoke support from the strategic team.

- 3,158 practitioners attended CFW PL events across the year:
    - 97% of RCT schools attended the CfW events summer term 2019.
    - 82% RCT schools (294 school leaders/practitioners) attended the CfW Senior and Middle Leaders Briefings in spring 2020. Further events were planned during March 2020 but were cancelled due to COVID-19.
    - 24 practitioners across 20 RCT schools attended PL related to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).
    - Six RCT schools participated in the RSE PL programme (46%) of the cohort), four full-day sessions from April 2019-March 2020: Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, Tonyrefail Community School, Ysgol Ty Coch, Ysgol Nant Gwyn and Abercynon Primary School.
    - Governor briefings on CfW were postponed in April 2020 due to COVID-19. The PL was repurposed into an asynchronous playlist. 93% of all respondents said completing the resources had strongly developed their understanding of the CfW Framework. 100% stated they would recommend the programme to others and they would like to engage in further online PL. Data related to RCT engagement in these PL resources is not available as the playlists were made readily accessible to all and therefore no booking was required.
    - A practitioner asynchronous playlist was also developed and published in May 2020. 100% of participants stated: the resource enhanced their knowledge of educational reform in Wales, the content was appropriate to their needs and skills level, and they would recommend the resources. Evaluation data related to RCT engagement in these PL resources is also not available as the playlists were made readily accessible to all and therefore no booking was required.
- CfW: The Journey to 2022 was created in collaboration with the other regions, ESTYN and WG. This document sets out the suggested phases of engagement for school in the realisation of CfW.
- A cross-regional CfW PL programme aligned to the CfW realisation phases was developed and launched at the CfW Spring Term briefings. However, this was paused in March 2020 due to COVID-19.
- Ten practitioners across the region were identified as Creative Leaders to coach and mentor practitioners in their own and partner schools, two of which were from RCT: Gwaunmeisgyn and Hawthorn High). 14 partner schools participated in the programme, five of which were from RCT: Caradog Primary, St John Baptist School, Treorchy Primary, Tonyrefail Community School and YGGG Llantrisant), and were led through the process prior to lockdown.
- 29 schools from RCT have participated in the Creative Learning through the Arts Programme. The programme involves engaging with creative learning and specifically Expressive Arts disciplines.
- All RCT clusters have engaged in collaboration to support the development of CfW. Evaluation of all cluster working across the region shows proxy indicators of impact in practitioner learning and, in the most successful cases, changes in behaviour. 56% focused on pedagogy. 44% focused on provision. 56% show impact at learning level.

25% show changes in practitioners' behaviour. 19% show an impact on learners' results. Clusters report on the overall impact as a collaborative group. As agreed with LS Directors, clusters were not asked to send an end of year evaluation due to COVID-19. Therefore, the data listed above is taken from the mid-year evaluations.

10.0 National categorisation was suspended from September 2020 and a new evolving model for IP deployment was consulted on in the summer term 2020 and implemented from September 2020. To reflect the changing approach, Challenge Advisors were renamed Improvement Partners.
Appendix 1 – The evolving role of the Improvement Partner.

COMPARATIVE DATA

11.0 **EXTRACT FROM MINISTER'S STATEMENT 3 JULY 2020**

'When I announced the cancellation of the 2020 summer examinations series, due to the coronavirus pandemic, I also confirmed that we would not be publishing performance measures. That decision covered all school and post-16 performance measures for the 2019/20 academic year.

It is clear that there will also be implications of the ongoing disruption to schools and post-16 providers for qualifications awarded next year, particularly those which are two-year courses of study. I am, therefore, providing early clarity that the suspension of Key Stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures will be extended to the 2020/21 academic year.

All schools and post-16 providers will continue to be required to undertake effective self-evaluation to support continuous improvement. Our evaluation, improvement and accountability arrangements require consideration of a broad range of information relevant to a school's own context when undertaking self-evaluation and identifying improvement priorities. This will involve schools, with support from local authorities and regional consortia, using the learner level information they have on attainment and other outcomes to reflect on and improve their existing arrangements.

In 2020/21, as for 2019/20, qualification awards data will not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, LA or regional consortium level and must not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes. My previous assurances that awards will not be used in this way were essential in ensuring learners could be awarded fair outcomes, based on objective centre assessed grades, arrived at without the pressure associated with performance measures or accountability arrangements.'

12.0 **CSC POSITION**

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It is important to note and understand that following WG's suspension of statutory data collections and publication of outcomes for 2019-20 and 2020-21, there will be a reduction in analysis available within CSC. However, schools will have their own internal systems for tracking and analysing pupil performance/outcomes and, whilst there is no expectation that schools will need to provide this information to CSC IPs for accountability reasons, a range of questions may still be used by colleagues in discussion with school leaders to inform CSC support for school improvement and partnership working in 2020-21.

13.0 **CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE CONSORTIUM BEFORE AND DURING LOCKDOWN ON BEHALF OF RCT LA**

- In 2019-20, RCT LA £1,014,176 towards the core functions of the consortium. In addition to the core costs of the consortium, this has provided funding for 15 IPs (6.96 FTE) plus support from Accelerated Progress Leads (0.23 FTE) effective from September 2018 and Principal Improvement Partners (PIPs) (2 FTE).
- Estyn suspended their inspection activity in March 2020. Eight schools were inspected during 2019-20 (Ty Gwyn Education Centre, Caradog Primary, Porth Community, Ynysboeth Community, Hawthorn High, St John Baptist High, Cilfynydd Primary and Penygawsi Primary). Of these, one school (St John Baptist High School) was asked to write an excellent practice case study, one school was placed in a follow up category of Estyn Review, one school was judged as having important weaknesses that outweighed the strengths and was therefore placed in the statutory category of Significant Improvement, and one school has been placed in Special Measures. Two further schools were identified for inspection (Trallwng Infants and Our Lady's RC Primary) but these were cancelled due to COVID-19.
- Due to COVID-19, Estyn ceased any follow up activity for schools in statutory categories in March 2020. Of the schools inspected in previous years, two schools were removed from an Estyn category and six schools remain in an Estyn follow up category. Three schools (Aberdare Community, Craig-Yr-Hesg and Cefn Primary) are in Significant Improvement. Three schools (Mountain Ash, Williamstown Primary and Abernant Primary) are in Estyn Review.

14.0 Elected Members will be aware that we use a categorisation process to identify the schools in need of support using both data and judgement of leadership and capacity to improve. During 2019-20, the consortium continued to work closely on behalf of the LA to monitor the progress of the schools in need. Of the 115 schools in RCT, three schools required red level of support and 13 schools required amber level of support. There were 50 schools requiring green support and 49 requiring yellow support. These figures are based on the published National Categorisation as of January 2020. If in-year changes are to be taken into account, then these figures become 5 red, 11 amber, 49 yellow and 50 green.

15.0 IPs continue to have a relevant educational background and level of experience and provide good quality support and challenge to schools. They have continued to work

well and in partnership with the LA to provide effective monitoring, challenge, support and intervention where needed. IPs have continued to commission bespoke support and intervention from the wider support teams within the CSC.

16.0

a. Other support provided by the consortium to schools in RCT:

- 81 schools, within RCT have accessed professional development programmes provided by Hub schools across the region. There were 283 attendees across the events held.
- RCT schools involved in providing support as part of the Hub programme in 2019-2020 were:
    - Developing the Key Stage 3 Expressive Arts Curriculum - Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School.
    - Secondary Mathematics - Literacy in Maths - Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School.
    - Improving Reading in English KS3/4 - Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School.
    - Challenge and Expectation in English - Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School.
    - Developing literacy skills in secondary Science - Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School.
    - Secondary Science- Numeracy in Science - Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School.
    - As easy as ABC: Effective teaching of phonological awareness and phonics - Brynnau Primary.
    - 'Into the Unknown with Determination and Purpose!' Developing quality play and creative experiences - Brynnau Primary.
    - Numeracy Across the Curriculum - Cilfynydd Primary.
    - Problem solving - Cilfynydd Primary.
    - Primary Coding Programme – Cwmclydach.
    - Developing Effective Collaboration – Cwmclydach.
    - Primary Coding Programme – Cwmclydach.
    - Developing Effective Collaboration – Cwmclydach.
    - What's the point in writing – Cwmlai.
    - More than just reading – Cwmlai.
    - Leadership in digital learning - Darran Park.
    - Citizenship - Darran Park.
    - GCSE Music Network - Hawthorn High.
    - Welsh Bacc Level 2 SCC - Hawthorn High.
    - GCSE Business Studies Network - Tonyrefail Community School.
    - A-level Computer Science, GCSE Computer Science and GCSE ICT Networks - Tonyrefail Community School.
    - Reading within the new Welsh Second Language GCSE - Treorchy Comprehensive.
    - Welsh Second Language - Entry Pathways - Treorchy Comprehensive.
    - DCF coordinators Network - Treorchy Comprehensive.

- o Developing resources for A Level Spanish - Y Pant Comprehensive School.
- o Developing resources for GCSE Spanish - Y Pant Comprehensive School.
- o Developing boys' literacy: Writing across the Curriculum - Ysgol Bodringallt.
- o Developing a culture of Enquiry - Ysgol Llanhari, Ysgol Ty Coch.
- o Leadership of Foundation Phase – Dolau Primary, Brynnau Primary.
- o Teachers new to ALN Update – Ysgol Ty Coch.

- The following schools were identified as WG Pioneer Schools during 2019-20:
  - o Abercynon Primary (Curriculum pioneers: Languages, Literacy and Communication).
  - o Cardinal Newman (Curriculum pioneers: Science and Technology).
  - o Treorchy Comprehensive School (PLPs).
  - o Ysgol Garth Olwg (Curriculum pioneers: Expressive Arts).
  - o Tai Education Centre (PLPs).
  - o Ysgol Nantgwyn (Curriculum pioneers: Expressive Arts, and Science and Technology).
- In April 2020, WG funding for pioneer schools ceased as the work in producing the CfW framework and guidance was complete. Abercynon Primary and Ysgol Garth Olwg applied to become regional representatives for their respective areas of learning and experience, funded to support other schools across CSC for a maximum of 15 days in April 2020-April 2021.

- Most RCT schools have been involved in SIG working. During 2019-20, SIGs including RCT schools have focused on the new curriculum, Welsh Bacc, Welsh, care, support and guidance, Post-16, self-evaluation, literacy, numeracy, pedagogy, pupil voice, leadership, ICT and digital curriculum framework (DCF) assessment, enquiry, ALN/Inclusion, AFL/Assessment, wellbeing and closing the gap. SIGs are reviewed annually and must provide an impact report against their priorities twice a year in order to be funded.
  - o 79 primary schools are engaged with SIG activity.
  - o 15 secondary schools are engaged with SIG activity.
  - o Five special schools are engaged with SIG activity.
  - o Ten convenors are from RCT. Some are joint convenors and share the role.
  - o RCT is represented in 32 out of 32 primary SIGs and 6 out of 6 secondary SIGs.

  b. The consortium has invested heavily in leadership provision in the 2019-20 year. For RCT schools, this has included opportunities to support another school with leadership capacity, leadership of school to school provision and direct leadership programmes. Of these:
  - 11 Head Teachers have undertaken the New and Acting Head Teacher programme.
  - One senior leader has completed the Aspiring Head Teacher pilot programme.
  - 11 Deputy Head Teachers have completed the Improved Leadership Skills for Deputy Head Teachers programme.
  - 9 successful NPQH candidates.

- 75% of NQTs, 27% of Induction Mentors and 96% of external verifiers within the LA accessed the Induction training programme (higher in 20/21).

c. One teaching assistant completed the Aspiring HLTA Programme and was successfully assessed in order to achieve HLTA status in 2019-20 (higher in 20/21) and a further 11 completed the Induction Teaching Assistant training.

d. Support for schools is prioritised following a strategic analysis of regional needs. This is reviewed on a termly basis as information and priorities emerge. Schools receive intensive support for core subjects as agreed with the school's IP and progress is fed back to school through a strategic evaluation for improvement statement and to the LA Director in the termly performance report. Foundation subject qualifications are supported through Lead Practitioner networks, which provide opportunities for schools to collaborate on joint practice development and share effective strategies and resources. 30 participants from 19 schools across RCT attended Foundation Phase events. Hub school programmes are aligned to support regional needs and the consortium brokers PL opportunities for schools requiring improvement across the regional PLO. 259 participants from 81 schools across RCT attended these programmes. Intensive school-to-school support is facilitated through requests for additional capacity funding from Hub schools and lead practitioners to support targeted improvement activities in more vulnerable schools.

e. All red and amber support schools have a bespoke package that is recorded within a support plan. Key improvement objectives are identified, and regular school improvement forums held to judge the impact of the support in enabling the school to meet its objectives. A judgement is made on the extent of the progress the schools have made in meeting each objective. This information is provided to directors in termly progress reports.

f. Each term, CSC prepares a detailed report for Directors and then meets with them to discuss the aspects of the report that they select. The report contains a detailed breakdown of the support provided within the previous term.

17.0 The consortium continues to take a lead role in the development of the CfW, working with pioneer schools, WG and in partnership with the other regional consortia across Wales.

- CfW was published on 28 January 2020. A comprehensive cross-regional programme of PL for CfW has been developed by the four regional consortia in partnership with Innovation Schools, Quality Improvement and PLPs. The programme is aimed at supporting all schools in the realisation of the curriculum and the wider education reforms. Schools and practitioners who have not been part of the pioneer process also supported the development of the programme across CSC. The programme aligns to the National Approach to Professional Learning (NAPL). The programme (see overview below) aligns to the consistent expectations developed and agreed in discussion between WG, regional consortia and Estyn to aid schools in planning their approach

and sequencing of activities in curriculum realisation. The programme is broadly differentiated by career milestones so that practitioners at different milestones receive relevant knowledge and skills to effectively realise the curriculum. A Head Teacher and Senior Leader session was held in January 2020. 168 RCT LA attendees engaged in the Middle Leader session during February-March 2020. All materials and resources used in the Head Teacher and Middle Leader briefing sessions were made available to schools following the sessions so that Head Teachers and Middle Leaders could disseminate the training wider with their school colleagues. We included notes and guidance so they could be used in a train-the-trainer approach. These are all stored within the Knowledge Bank and signposted on the webpage here: https://www.cscjes.org.uk/curriculum-for-wales

- Due to COVID-19, the publication of the Journey to 2022 document was paused and the document underwent redevelopment within Deliverable 10 of the WG Continuity of Learning Plan. WG is due to release the revised document mid-October 2020. As a further consequence of COVID-19, the national and regional programmes were paused. CSC schools were informed that there was no expectation for practitioners or governors to participate in the programme during the challenging context of COVID-19. However, online PL relating to CfW continued to be developed and available for those who had the time, space and desire to undertake. The national PL programme has since been further revised and developed with the first modules due to be launched in autumn term 2020. The national CfW PL programme was paused between March-October 2020. The CfW PL developed and made asynchronously available to schools was accessed by eight RCT schools. This equates to 21% of all schools who completed the resource.

  Those RCT schools were:
  - o Gwauncelyn Primary School
  - o Pontypridd High School
  - o Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun (x4)
  - o Ysgol Garth Olwg (x2)

  All RCT schools stated in the evaluation that they would 'highly recommend' the resource to others. All stated, too, that the resource had 'developed their understanding of the CfW framework'.

- The CfW PL developed and made asynchronously available to governors (to replace the briefing sessions that were planned April 2020 but had to be cancelled due to COVID-19) were accessed by six RCT governors. This equated to 14% of all who completed the resource.

- The pioneer schools focused entirely on finalising the curriculum framework from September 2019 to January 2020 and were then used by WG to feed into additional work streams and provide intelligence to them and feedback on the entire process

during February and March 2020. They did not have capacity for additional regional work during this time.

- Governor briefings were scheduled for March/April 2020 but had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. An asynchronous version of the briefings was created and made freely available without need for logging in. 14% of the respondents to our evaluation form embedded in the resource were from RCT schools.

WORK OF THE CONSORTIUM DURING NATIONAL LOCKDOWN MARCH TO JULY 2020

18.0   ROLE OF IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS AND PRINCIPAL IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS

This is an overview of support and work undertaken by IPs and PIPs in the regions. There are variations in how the regions work, therefore all points might not be reflective of practice in all regions.

IPs/PIPs played a crucial role during lockdown in carrying out the following work:

- Making regular contact with schools to support the wellbeing of Head Teachers and staff.
- Supporting schools with developing models for distance and blended learning, including sharing effective practice.
- Supporting schools to ensure effective teaching and learning within these distance and blended models.
- Supporting LAs and schools with repurposing of learners back into schools.
- Working with LAs and schools to ensure that all schools had a comprehensive support plan to help them address the significant challenges ahead.
- Delivering or brokering the support needed based on each individual school's need.
- Supporting and facilitating cluster meetings and networks to ensure effective school to school support and joint working.
- Supporting schools to develop effective processes and strategic documents that are appropriate for the current and evolving circumstances.
- Providing support and advice for governors.
- Supporting schools with recruitment and appointments.
- Supporting schools with PL when it was appropriate and timely to do so.
- Supporting schools and clusters with guidance and support on the national reform journey when it was appropriate and timely to do so.

This range of activities supported schools to deliver wellbeing and learner support during the unprecedented time of change for schools through last summer. It enabled schools to develop a remote and blended form of learning, enabled the safe return to schools for the recovery period toward the end of the summer period, and enabled schools to support pupils undertaking key qualifications under a system never previously experienced in Welsh education.

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19.0 FINER DETAILS OF THE WORK OF PRINCIPAL IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS, IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS AND STRATEGIC ADVISERS ARE OUTLINED BELOW:

a. Supporting Distance Learning

So far, a large portion of IPs'/PIPs' work has been supporting effective distance learning in schools before and following the publication WG Guidance Document on effective Distance Learning. This has included:

- Referencing effective practice internationally when it comes to distance learning.
- Providing a suite of websites and reference points for Foundation Phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4 teachers.
- Modelling examples of effective distance learning that has been shared locally and nationally.
- Supporting schools on how to best deliver this Distance Learning through a blended method, including recorded video, effective use of HwB, populating Google Classrooms, and using paper copies when there is s no internet access etc.
- Supporting schools in their Hubs or individual schools when there has been a shortage of staff to attend.
- Keeping regular contact with schools in order to ensure the health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils.
- Arranging regular 'virtual' contact meetings with all clusters and Head Teacher meetings to share regular updates, consider lessons learned to inform preparation and practice, and ensure Heads have regular contact and time to share any problems that may arise.
- Supporting schools with Digital Learning and producing useful 'How To' videos so that teachers can further develop and vary their distance learning.
- Individual support to subject specific teachers in the secondary sector.
- Termly network meetings to support curriculum leaders/coordinators integral to the PL offer.
- Engaging in own PL of workforce to develop understanding of distance learning, to include research of best practice national and internationally.

b. Developing a blended approach encompassing distance learning and face to face learning.

As discussions develop around phased return to schools, for some learners IPs/PIPs will need to:

- Support schools with effective blended learning where some pupils will be supported at home and others taught in schools.
- Ensure there is no gap in the equity of provision as some pupils return to some form of education.
- Continue to support the health and wellbeing of teachers (who may be teaching several age groups) when they need to teach some learners in schools and continue to support others at home.

- Continue to ensure the health and wellbeing of learners who will be returning to a very different classroom during the phased return.
- Provide further PL to teachers and teaching assistants on how to best model this 'mixed economy' of provision.
- As lockdown for most continues, support teachers in the transition from consolidating previous learning to teaching of new aspects.
- Support schools when moving to monitoring and giving constructive feedback on work presented.
- As and when required, continue to support the health and wellbeing of teachers (who may be teaching several age groups) when they need to teach some learners in schools and continue to support others at home.
- As and when required, continue to ensure the health and wellbeing of learners who will be returning to a very different classroom during the phased return.
- With sensitivity to the operational pressures that schools face, work with schools on evaluating the engagement levels and the quality of learning undertaken by pupils during periods of remote learning.

c. Supporting Professional Learning (PL)

PL support has focused on effective distance learning. All schools have been on a journey to find out what model of distance learning works best for them, their cluster and their pupils. There will inevitably be continued support from consortia for effective distance learning as we move to a phased return to schools, but we also recognise that further down the line some teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) may be looking for further PL. To meet these needs consortia have developed and are in the process of developing the following:

- A comprehensive catalogue of PL that has been identified for TAs to follow.
- A walk-through guide with raising awareness activities for teachers on the CfW.
- Webinars tailormade for Head Teachers around Change Management, developing a school vision, creating time and space for PL, Planning for Curriculum Change and Leading Pedagogy that will include some face to face interaction, group discussions, think pieces and video clips for reflection.
- Reflecting on pedagogy – for current practice and for the new curriculum.
- Contribute to the national strategy of supporting NQTs during this period where their focus will be on pedagogy and research due to the unavailability of class access.
- Provide models for effective distance learning for the schools to adopt and adjust as they see fit.
- Develop and provide quality resources to support effective distance learning.
- Learning from national and international models on how to best develop effective distance learning.

CSC – Empowering schools to improve outcomes for all learners

d. Supporting the repurposing of schools

The logistics of further opening schools, not only to the children of key workers and vulnerable children but also to specific year groups, are complicated and pose numerous problems. Consortia has committed to working in strong partnership across the region to adopt a consistent approach in developing a supportive framework to help all school settings during this next phase of preparing and working in the new normal. As part of this, IPs/PIPs are working closely with LA officers to support their robust return to school plans, which will support all schools in the region to ensure they have the right policies in place and a comprehensive risk assessment that they can tailor to their own particular school.

20.0   RCT LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORT ON DISTANCE LEARNING SUMMER TERM 2020

Background and Context

- This is an overview of the level of engagement of learners in distance learning and digital learning and to consider their wellbeing.
- It summarises the planning process, an overview of key findings, barriers and challenges encountered by schools and what is working effectively across the region, concluded by areas for consideration moving forward.
- The objectives of the survey were to:
  o Work collaboratively with schools to complete the light touch questions regarding the engagement of learners.
  o Develop a LA and regional overview of current practice regarding how learners are accessing distance learning and digital learning, while also considering how learners are engaging.
  o Identify effective practice to inform and support regional guidance and models going forward.
  o Identify key barriers and how to support schools in collaboration with LA and partners.
- The survey covered five focused questions. Information was collected via conversations held between IPs and Head Teachers.
- In total, in RCT discussion took place with 87.2% of Head Teachers.
- It is important to note that in most discussions with Head Teachers, schools report that they have been regular contact with parents including conducting their own surveys. This has helped to add validity to the responses.
- The findings of this survey proved to be a helpful starting point to begin the process of gathering evidence to make judgements about the provision for and quality of distance learning.

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Key Questions and Summary Responses

How do you know your learners are fit and healthy?
- Nearly all schools provide regular online learning links promoting physical activity as part of their distance learning menu.
- Most schools record that they make regular phone calls home to ascertain the wellbeing and general health of the pupils.
- Nearly all schools provide a varied selection of physical activities appropriate to the age of the pupils.
- There is strong evidence of pupil engagement recorded through online learning platforms e.g. SeeSaw and Google Classrooms.

How many learners are engaged?
- 20% of schools reported that most or nearly all of their learners were engaged with distance and digital learning.
- 42% of schools reported that many of their learners were engaged with distance and digital learning.
- 20% of schools reported that a majority of their learners were engaged with distance and digital learning.
- 11% of schools reported that around half of their learners were engaged with distance and digital learning.
- 6% of schools reported that a minority of their learners were engaged with distance and digital learning.

The table below shows the percentages of learners engaged with distance and digital learning.

	Range	Average
Infant	60% - 85%	72.5%
Primary	28% - 96%	71%
Secondary	40% - 90%	64.6%
Special & PRU	5% - 80%	54.4%

- The average engagement in infants' schools is fractionally higher than in primary settings, although it is worth noting that the number of infant settings is far smaller proportionately to primary establishments.
- Special schools and PRUs account for the lowest average engaged.
- Broadly speaking, where eFSM is higher, the number of engaged learners is lower.

Learners who are not engaging – who and why?
- In general, pupils are becoming less engaged as time goes on.
- Motivational issues for older KS2 pupils, particularly Year 6, who feel they will not be returning to primary school.
- Behaviour and wellbeing issues at home, which parents find difficult to deal with.

- Some parents have stated it is the job of teachers to teach and not their role as parents.
- Some pupils whose parents are not confident to appropriately support them with online tasks and maybe unfamiliar with the platforms in use.
- Pupils whose parents do not have the literacy skills or numeracy skills to support the children themselves.
- Parents struggling to manage working from home commitments and home-learning. Parents may be key workers and do not have the time.
- Lack of adequate IT facilities at home, including limited or non-existent Wi-Fi access and a lack of devices, which can be magnified in multiple child households.
- The children least likely to engage in e-learning seem to be pupils of lower ability and/or those from more vulnerable homes where parents are generally 'hard to engage' during normal school time. Specific groups of pupils highlighted were ALN, particularly those pupils with complex needs, emotional needs and ASD pupils, eFSM. These groups of pupils struggle as they perceive that schoolwork is completed in school and not at home. There is an early indication in a few settings that suggests boys are engaging less than girls.

What are the barriers and challenges?
- Pupils being digitally excluded due to a lack of suitable devices and internet access.
- Initially EAL learners, though Dojo is used to aid translation. Some parents may have low literacy and numeracy skills and lack the confidence to support pupils or use online platforms.
- Staff expertise in new methods of teaching and learning.
- Welsh schools are concerned about the deterioration in use of the Welsh language as many pupils come from non-Welsh speaking homes.

What works well for you and why?

ICT
- Pupil and parent improvement in the use of technology.
- Development of digital competency skills.
- Pupils' and parents' increased confidence in using online platforms.
- Staff professional development and learning new IT skills (developing pedagogy).

Communication
- Positive feedback from parents to the timely responses from staff (using various methods, e.g. learning platforms, email, phone, Facebook, school website etc.).
- Maintaining relationships between staff and pupils.
- Parents welcoming the regular 'check-in' phone calls, offering both wellbeing support and distance learning guidance.
- Positive feedback to staff sharing videos, messages to families and virtual assemblies etc.

Engagement
- Pupils enjoying the freedom to choose which tasks/assignments to complete.
- Positive parental engagement, with increased number accessing home learning and families learning together.
- Pupils' enjoyment and producing high quality work.

These findings identified the need to further strengthen staff IT training, the methods of communication schools used to engage with pupils and parents, and the availability of appropriate devices for pupils learning at home.

21.0 BESPOKE IMPROVEMENT PARTNER WORK TO SUPPORT THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

Following discussions between LAs and Senior Improvement Advisers, we produced a bespoke list of work identifying the priorities for the LAs and CSC Officers to support the opening of schools. Officers were flexible and adapted to the changing needs and requirements of schools and LAs. Our regional priorities were to ensure the wellbeing of Head Teachers and school communities and the continuity of learning. Bespoke support was offered to all schools to develop their blended learning offer. Engagement in the support declined significantly during the second part of the summer term, when schools were informed of return to the class-based learning in July. It was clear that the immediate focus for schools was to ensure safe and secure physical learning environments for pupils to return to. A significant amount of Welsh resources was produced to support Welsh-medium learners in English-medium homes.

RCT LA Improvement Partner
- Wellbeing of Head Teacher support – at least weekly contact with all schools regardless of support category.
- Support for school restart and recovery planning
- Sharing of practice regarding Distance and Digital Learning practices.
- Transition.
- Governance – attendance at meetings, as appropriate.
- Virtual recruitment and appointments.
- Regular attendance at virtual SLT meetings.
- Support Meetings.
- Brokering support and peer working.
- Monthly RCT IP Meetings.
- Responding to request for information from WG.
- Role of IP Working Party meetings.

RCT LA Principal Improvement Partner
- Co-chairing of RCT IP Team Meetings (weekly through lockdown, monthly currently).
- Organising and chairing of support meetings.

- Meetings with LA Primary and Secondary Heads of Achievement.
- Regular 1:1 meetings with Director and Primary and Secondary Heads of Achievement.
- Weekly 1:1 catch ups with IPs.
- Regular attendance at LA SMT meetings.
- Regular visits to the hub schools through lockdown.
- Governance – attendance at meetings as appropriate.
- Weekly SMT COVID-19 meetings.
- CoL review and briefing paper undertaken for Director.
- LA recovery planning meeting twice weekly through lockdown.
- Supporting IPs with appointment processes, linking with HR and Governor Support.
- Attendance at Qualifications Wales/WJEC/ADEW update meetings.
- Writing LA responses to Councillors' questions.

22.0 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT REQUESTED THROUGH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY ANNEX

In 2019–20, £34,269 [2] additional funding was provided to support RCT specific priorities via the LA Annex:

- To continue to reduce exclusion rates through building positive relations.
- To ensure all MAT working across the LA, for all age groups, is consistent and enables the LA to track pupils through the key stages.
- To improve the uptake and skills for modern foreign languages.
- Research into improving boys' performance through literacy.

23.0 IMPACT UPDATE - REDUCING EXCLUSION RATES THROUGH BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONS

- Cluster model for RAIS to involve Treorchy Comprehensive and all feeder primaries. The work will be led by Julia Houlston Clark from WRAP Wales.
- The following training has been successfully completed to date:
  - Building and maintaining relationships across the whole school stakeholder engagement - staff, pupils, parents, governors.
  - Shared needs exercise to determine core needs and values and behaviours arising Circles for pastoral care, teaching and learning, problem solving low level.
  - Core Strategic Team identified from key areas (future area leads and potential trainers from this group).
  - Strategic planning aligned to Estyn and national Restorative Service Quality Mark Transition work.
  - Heads and SLT key RA lead attended Restorative Management Training.

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[2] *Data provided for the financial year (April 2019 - March 2020).*

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- o Review, evaluate and monitor outcomes and data sets, and attend RCT Steering Group.
- While some training remains incomplete due to school closures, the training contributed effectively to a reduction in exclusion and improved internal behaviour data at the comprehensive school, as of March 2020.

24.0 IMPACT UPDATE - ENSURING ALL MAT WORKING ACROSS THE LA, FOR ALL AGE GROUPS, IS CONSISTENT AND ENABLES THE LA TO TRACK PUPILS THROUGH THE KEY STAGES

- December 2019 – MAT conference for Year 9 learners held at UWIC. The Seren Hub also engaged in this event.
- As a result of the conference, many learners and staff have a greater understanding of future pathways, as well as knowledge of a more diverse range of studies available to them.
- The establishment of the MAT forum in RCT now involves all cluster MAT champions, one from each cluster.
- This has successfully developed an electronic platform for sharing good practices in conjunction with the pre-16 Seren Hub. This work is being led by Alison Lambert of Hawthorn High School.
- The launch will take place when fully adapted to meet the needs of all learners.

25.0 IMPACT UPDATE - IMPROVING THE UPTAKE AND SKILLS FOR MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- Pontypridd Cluster Plan – overall aims:
  - o To focus planning around the new Wales curriculum 2022 on Languages, Literacy and Communication AOLE.
  - o To prioritise the teaching and learning of International Languages as part of this AOLE.
  - o To target the plan at all Year 4 pupils within cluster primary schools from September 2019.
  - o To focus on Spanish as the international language, taught in each cluster school by PHS staff.
  - o To include broader learning opportunities that cover essential skills and link to other AOLEs.
  - o To plan assessments that meet expectations of the Progression Step 3.

- **Key Aim**
  - o For an increased number of students at PHS to choose GCSE Spanish from September 2024.
  - o Success criteria – Year 1 (2019/20).
  - o PHS Spanish specialist teacher has delivered a Spanish language lesson to Year 4 students in each cluster school – one 90-minute contact a minimum of every 3 weeks.

- o There has been improved oracy skills linked to language learning.
- o Learning experiences linked to each AOLE have been delivered alongside the teaching of Spanish.
- o Two whole year group transition events have been held at PHS to celebrate progress.
- o Links with language specialists such as at USW have been used to support and enhance learning experiences.
- o It is the intention to continue this programme of teaching through each of the net two academic years (2020-21 and 2021-22), so that all students arrive in Year 7 at PHS from September 2022 with 3 years of Spanish teaching behind them.
- o Whilst the PHS teacher delivered the main teaching content in each of the lessons as part of the rota, the designated primary class teacher in each of the primary schools was also present. The purpose has been to support the teaching whilst gaining very effective PL in Spanish. This has allowed each teacher to build up a level of expertise that means they are now able to deliver Spanish as an international language to future year groups, thus giving a sustainability to this plan.
- o The teaching content has been planned by a steering group of teachers representing each of the PHS primary cluster schools, with the lead Spanish teacher and the Leader of Learning for Languages at PHS coordinating meetings.
- o The teaching through the autumn term of 2019 has had a focus on engagement through speaking and listening. There has been a focus on 'oral games', including singing and dancing, with all students involved. At present, there is limited written work and no formal assessment. The latter has been discussed as part of the review meetings in the spring and summer of 2020 (during lockdown) and these discussions informed the programme for 2020-21 as students progress into Year 5.
- o With respect to the 6 AOLEs, the Languages, Literacy and Communication AOLE is obviously being directly addressed. As the PHS teacher visits each school on a three-week rota, the intervening lessons are taught by the primary based lead teacher, following the advice of the PHS lead with resources shared across the cluster. There is also opportunity in these lessons to broaden the theme of 'Spanish' and 'Spain', introducing learning experiences linked to each of the other 5 AOLEs. It is evident that classroom displays have been developed to reflect this work and reinforce learning.
- o Pupil voice has demonstrated very good engagement.

26.0 IMPACT UPDATE – RESEARCHING WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES TO BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING SERVICES

- • Trauma informed training successfully undertaken in the Spring Term for all Head Teacher and Delegate Head Teachers across RCT with Kate Cairns.

- Behaviour training with Tom Bennet has been commissioned, but the event has been postponed due to school closure.
- As a result, this priority has yet to be completed.

CSC – Empowering schools to improve outcomes for all learners

Appendix 1 – The evolving role of the Improvement Partner

Supporting School Improvement September 2020 Onwards
CSC is commissioned by our partner LAs to provide school improvement for the region. This involves providing support and challenge to schools to ensure learners across the region have the right educational experiences to allow them to make progress and be successful in the next phase of learning or employment. This document forms part of the Framework for School Improvement and the Intervention Strategy for Schools Causing Concern.

The current pandemic has resulted in significant changes to the educational landscape and, as such, the categorisation of schools will not take place this year. This will provide us with an opportunity to trial a new Challenge Advisor (CA) deployment system until the new version of categorisation is available. We are also aware that there will be significant changes to the national model in the coming year.

We are refocusing our work and will rename the school improvement professionals who are in a CA role as IPs. We feel this reflects the essential partnership with school leaders and the LA to ensure that schools are empowered to provide the best possible education for all learners. The core purpose of an IP is to provide the right support and challenge to enable school leaders to improve outcomes for all learners. We will use 2020-21 academic year as an opportunity to work with Head Teachers and LA to further develop our operational model.

We are developing an in-depth PL programme for all CSC staff to ensure all staff have the skills to carry out their roles in a changing environment. We are also working with the Association of Education Advisors to develop an accreditation programme that meets the needs of our staff and will roll this out over the year.

Currently there are four aspects of a CA/IP role:
- Aspect 1: Supporting school self-evaluation and improvement
- Aspect 2: Broker effective support and intervention
- Aspect 3: Developing school leadership at all levels across the school
- Aspect 4: Build school-to-school capacity

Allocation of Support
Historically, support is allocated based on categorisation. This is challenging as categorisation is published and impacts on the external view of the school. The new model tries to ensure that support is provided in a fair way that is inversely proportional to need. However, it also recognises that all schools are going through a significant period of change.

Initially each school is allocated a core number of days for the IP to carry out required functions and use the appropriate tools to determine support needs of the school. This will inform brokerage, any requirement for regular progress reviews and provide opportunity to quality assure the ongoing support.

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Schools will receive a basic **minimum** allocation of days and further time will be allocated based on the support needs identified. Specified days might not all be from the same IP but might include the work of others more specialist in certain areas.

Primary	7
Special	10
Secondary	10
3-19	10

Support Functions

Although categorisation has been suspended for the new academic year, it is essential that schools receive the support they need to improve. The IP will be providing challenge on behalf of the LA to ensure support is appropriate and that there is a measurable impact against the priorities. In 2020-21 we will be using a hybrid support model that will continue to focus on improving current schools that received significant support in 2019-2020. **We will not withdraw support unless there is clear evidence that the school has made significant sustainable improvements**.

IPs will continue to support schools to develop effective school improvement plans and to ensure there is an appropriate evaluation of the impact of school improvement strategies. This will work in conjunction with the school systems and **will not generate** additional **work for school leaders**. IPs will continue to support the Governing Body with the Head Teachers performance management process and will support the governing body to understand their role in school improvement.

In addition, IPs will continue to:
- Agree the school improvement priorities and co-construct a plan for support.
- Allocate eFSM spend and regularly monitoring impact.
- Review the monitoring cycle.
- Collaborate with LA and CSC colleagues.

Based on the needs of the school, the IP will identify the support needs and broker support required. Support will be tightly focused on the actions in the SIP and brokerage will be coordinated by the PIP.

Once the support programme is agreed, the IP is responsible for quality assuring the impact of this support with the Head Teachers and Governors as appropriate. This will include regular discussions with the support team. There is also an expectation that the IP shares information with the LA and attends any school-focused LA meetings as necessary.

Links with LAs

IPs will continue to develop and foster collaborative working partnerships with LA colleagues. IPs are mindful of the individual systems and processes in each LA and will work accordingly. Joint collaboration will facilitate an effective sharing of information to ensure a mutual understanding to enable effective school improvement.

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IPs will continue using the successful strategies in place and will work with LA colleagues to adapt and improve where needs emerge. The PIP will continue to be a pivotal link with each LA and will ensure an effective two-way flow of information. We will ensure that LAs have regular feedback on the quality of provision and impact of support in all of their schools. Further links with LAs are identified in the Framework for School Improvement.

The Framework set out below focuses on three areas:

- **Wellbeing** – we recognise the pressures that have been put on leaders and staff across the school. It is essential that we support leaders to maintain their own wellbeing and that of their staff and learners.

- **Learning and Teaching** – teachers may need support to develop learning in a blended environment. Even if schools are open to all pupils, there will still be restrictions in place. There has been significant variation in provision since distance learning was implemented. Reference needs to be given to guidance from WG.

- **Leadership and Management** – leaders will need to be able to establish processes and procedures for monitoring the impact of wellbeing and learning strategies on learners and staff.

CSC recognises that school leaders have been heavily focused on operational and logistical issues in a reactive climate such as school organisation, health and safety, the wellbeing of staff and pupils, safeguarding, catering, transport and initial recovery planning. As schools move towards a more strategic approach to learning, **IPs should be mindful of individual schools' capacity to address this and the pace by which it is realistic for schools to make progress towards a more balanced climate of stabilisation and improvement.**

It is essential the IP forms a strong professional relationship with the Head Teacher. One of the key roles of the IP is to broker support that will help build capacity and empower the school to achieve the outcomes identified in the School Development Plan (SDP). Schools will continue to have the support they require, and this will be monitored by IPs and shared with LAs. Where schools cause significant concern, specific support and follow up mechanisms will be in place.

As IPs work with schools, they will need to be aware of the current position the school is in as part of their recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

The framework below provides an outline of prompts for dialogue with schools around their processes, with a focus on the impact of the lockdown on pupils' learning and wellbeing. The dialogue will be focused upon and structured around five fundamental questions for enquiry:

- What is the school's evaluation of this aspect?
- How do they know?

- What are they doing/planning to do to address any issues?
- How are they evaluating the success of their plans?
- What support do they require?

 Further detail to support conversations with school leaders during visits and potential sources of evidence and documents are included in the *Framework for School Improvement.*

	Early planning and recovery (Short Term)	**Recovery and transition (Medium Term)**	**Stabilisation and progression (Longer Term)**
Wellbeing	**Dialogue to focus initially on physical and emotional wellbeing of…** • … head teacher • … staff • … pupils • … families • … groups of pupils • … vulnerable pupils/pupils with ACEs **Supportive dialogue to explore how the whole school environment and facilities support good health and wellbeing and contribute to ensure the confidence of pupils, parents/carers, staff and other stakeholders? For example:** • *A secure and safe school site* • *Well maintained buildings and resources* • *Dining facilities* • *Toilets*	**As the school or setting moves out of early recovery and into a transitional period to stabilise, dialogue to focus upon:** **The physical and emotional wellbeing of:** • … head teacher • … staff • … pupils • … families • … groups of pupils • … vulnerable pupils/pupils with ACEs • Parents and the wider school community **IP discussion should aim to establish, support and encourage confidence to move forward.** **Supportive dialogue and signposting where appropriate to:** • Local, regional and national programmes and initiatives that will help the school to move forward towards stabilisation	**As provision and learning stabilises, dialogue to focus on moving towards quality and effectiveness of:** • Supporting learners' progress in relation to 'What Matters' in the health and wellbeing AOLE • Promoting the health and wellbeing of learners • Promoting positive attitudes to school and enjoyment of learning for all • Supporting learners to develop healthy relationships • Implementing strategies for resolving conflicts involving learners • Ensuring learners are safe • Establishing an inclusive learning environment • Meeting the needs of all learners, including ALN, vulnerable learners and those who are disadvantaged by poverty

	Spaces to play *Spaces to relax and socialise* *Sports facilities* *Toilet facilities* *Spaces for counselling or other therapeutic work* **Has the school worked with the LA to review safeguarding procedures following the impact of COVID-19 and school closures?** **IPs should be signposting services offered by each individual LA**	**This will include:** - Supporting the school to connect with and seek out support of professionals, peers and other networks - Supporting the school to ensure that useful mechanisms are in place to check the wellbeing of their senior leaders, staff, all pupils and their families on a regular basis - Promote, support and encourage senior leaders in the early identification of potential wellbeing issues and to be confident to address these in a sensitively and timely approach.	- Ensuring learners have sufficient opportunities to be physically active and healthy - Listening to learners and enables learners to influence matters that affect them - Monitoring all aspects of learners' wellbeing - Engaging with parents/carers to enhance their children's wellbeing - Working with external agencies to support learners' wellbeing - Promoting and upholding the rights of children and young people - Making use of environment and facilities to support good health and wellbeing
Learning & Teaching	**Dialogue to focus initially on:** - Reflective discussion on lockdown provision - Lockdown engagement barriers/solutions/implications - Distance and blended learning strengths to build upon - Vulnerable learner engagement reflections and actions	**During recovery, dialogue will likely focus on:** - Exploring and establishing the school's view of their present position and capacity to build on their work to date - Discussions with senior leaders to explore and establish the mechanisms in place to ensure continuity and progress in relation to literacy, numeracy (& ICT/digital competence	**As provision for teaching and learning stabilises, dialogue to focus on moving towards quality and effectiveness of:** - Curriculum - Meeting the needs of all learners - Vulnerable groups

	• All learning having a clear purpose, focused around what is important for leaners now and in the lower term • Focus on high quality teaching, including further development of approaches to blended learning • Curriculum planning and sequencing, considering WG guidance on autumn term learning • Indoor learning environment (development of and early reflections) • Outdoor learning environment and opportunities (development of and early reflections)	• Schools to consider how the impact of COVID-19 has affected their preparation and planning for the CfW and the early implications of this • The schools' present position in meeting the learning needs of all pupils. • **Provision for catch-up aimed at the vulnerable pupils previously identified** • **Identification of and provision for the 'new' vulnerable learners, including those for whom home learning has been less successful** • **Identification of and provision for those pupils who have 'plateaued', and where learning for such pupils could be accelerated** • **The delivery of relevant and meaningful distance/blended learning pedagogies** • Reviewing and/or establishing reliable and accurate marking, feedback and assessment mechanisms- 'in-school' • **Reviewing and/or establishing reliable and accurate marking, feedback and assessment mechanisms - 'distance and blended learning''** • The mechanisms in place to ensure equality of access to learning	• The quality blended learning planning and provision • The balance of quality provision in a blended learning climate • Impact of learning • Pupils' attitudes, dispositions and engagement towards learning • Continuity and progression of learning • Assessment of learning • Support, pace and challenge for learning • Teachers' knowledge, skills and expertise • Learning experiences • Indoor learning environment • Outdoor learning environment and the quality of opportunities

		• In secondary schools this will include focus on assessment and pupil readiness for external examinations	
Leadership	**Dialogue to focus initially on:** • Discussion and reflections on leadership during lockdown (to include governance) • Current Leadership: structure and fitness for purpose • Reflective discussion on job descriptions, roles and responsibilities • Evaluation of lockdown provision (School view) • Parent, pupil and governor evaluation of provision during lockdown and implications • Emerging key priorities, planning and budget discussion • PL needs and access to CPD • Resource implications on restart post-lockdown • Emerging support needs of the school for building leadership capacity	**As leaders reflect, evaluate and begin to identify the emerging priorities for their school, the Dialogue will likely focus upon:** • **Building the leadership capacity within the school to manage the change process post COVID-19** • The recovery of school plans to prepare for the CfW • The recovery of preparations and implications of the ALN Act • Continuity of learning (including distance and blended learning strategy) • The recovery of the Welsh language curriculum leadership, teaching, learning and provision • Any emerging statutory legislation	**As leaders further reflect, evaluate and identify the key school improvement priorities, the dialogue will likely focus upon the effectiveness of leadership and provision upon:** • Managing change in order to achieve stabilisation • The ethos and climate of the whole school community (including the resilience of staff, pupils and their families) • Ensuring the pace of school improvement is supporting pupils' wellbeing, learning, achievement and progress • Effectiveness and efficiency – the impact of grant spending, including the evaluation of the impact of additional funding allocated directly influenced by COVID-19

	• Monitoring and evaluating success of check in and catch up (school procedures) • Transition procedures, plans and implications • **SEC:** What issues were there with the school assessments in Year 1 and Year 13? • **SEC**: What are your plans for addressing issues with learning, assessment, wellbeing in Year 9, 10 and 12 specifically? • **SEC:** What is the school approach towards entering pupils for exams in November/Summer (specifically in relation to mathematics)?	**This will include:** • The identification of PL needs for senior leaders, middle leaders, teaching staff, learning support staff and governors, where appropriate • Provision the school is making for PL opportunities in relation to the SIP/Recovery Plan **Schools will also likely be mindful of the need to:** • Revisit their vision and mission in relation to the **core purposes** post-COVID-19 • Consider the purpose, value and involvement of all key partners/stakeholders in the co-construction of the roadmap to recovery and school improvement planning (communication and collaboration)	• Progress and effectiveness of their preparations and response to the CfW • **Progress and effectiveness of their preparations and response to the requirements and expectations of distance/blended learning approaches** • Progress and effectiveness of their preparations and provision of the Welsh Language curriculum • Progress and effectiveness of their preparations and response to the ALN act • Effectiveness of partnership working, including school to school collaboration • Appropriateness and effectiveness of PL towards achieving the school's vision and mission for all pupils

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		The involvement of leadership at all levels in line with their roles, responsibilities for:	Dialogue to focus on the effectiveness of school self-evaluation and improvement planning (using NEIR as a base where appropriate) in relation to the leadership of:
		- Emerging practice and the evaluation of blended learning approaches **An emerging picture of what 'good' blended learning looks like and how to build upon it effectively** - The growing recognition of the strengths, skills, knowledge and areas for development for teaching through the medium of digital learning - The growing recognition of the strengths, skills, knowledge and areas for development for teaching in the new classroom face to face provision - The need to develop the capacity of complementary learning environments **including home school learning** **Developing parental confidence and capacity to support their children's learning as part of a blended approach**	**Pedagogy of blended learning** - PL - Innovation - Collaboration - Staff and resources (including deployment of grant money)

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Deployment

All IPs are allocated up to 18 schools pro rata. IPs work with the Senior Leads to allocate schools to IPs based on prior knowledge of these schools. An IP is responsible for the accurate understanding of the performance and needs of schools. It is the IP's responsibility to get to know schools well, establish and secure effective professional relationships and broker the correct support.

A full and detailed skills audit of CSC staff will support the deployment of the most appropriate staff to support schools. Staff can be brokered to work in any school across the region to use individual skills most effectively.

Deploying a range of professionals into a school would ensure effective and efficient use of resources and excellent value for money for the consortium and for the schools in the region. A blended approach using a range of school improvement professionals and peer support schools will enable best support. No school is limited to the amount of support it receives. Support is allocated on a needs basis tightly linked to the SIP. The PIPs will ensure this is reviewed and will be key in ensuring consistency is applied across each LA and the region.

The AD for Partnership and Improvement will work with the PIPs to monitor the workload of staff and can allocate additional tasks to ensure efficiency. LAs are responsible for school improvement and this service is commissioned from CSC. Directors in each LA will be responsible for holding CSC leaders to account for the progress in their schools. There is a collective responsibility across the consortium to ensure that children and young people have the best possible outcomes.

Developing the skills of CSC

All CSC staff will continue to be engaged in appropriate professional leaning that focuses on developing the skills to effect change leading to improved outcomes. Currently we are developing a three-year programme of PL for our staff that will lead to all school-facing staff meeting the standards for Accredited Educational Advisors.