Welsh Government
Department for Education and Skills

Cycle of Review and Challenge Meetings with the Regional Consortia for School Improvement

Terms of Reference 2015

1. Background

The National Model for school improvement sets out consistent arrangements for the regional delivery of school improvement services across Wales.

As part of these arrangements, a series of common business plans, one per region, are in place which set out key priorities for each consortium for the year. These plans set out the expected outcomes against which each consortium’s performance will be measured.

The Minister for Education and Skills will formally accept (or not) headline business plans on an annual basis. The process of submitting and signing off the business plan should be completed by the end of March of each year. Whilst a one year business plan is a requirement of the National Model, the plan received by Welsh Government (WG) will be set within the context of the consortia’s wider three year planning cycle.

Through an annual cycle of review and challenge meetings, WG will monitor progress against, and hold consortia to account for their performance against the priorities and outcomes noted in the business plans, and against the agreed National Model and national priorities. An illustration of the annual cycle can be found at annex 1, (with detail of the purpose of each stage of the cycle at paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 below).

It should be noted that the review and challenge cycle is not an inspection and does not replace the work of Estyn or any other inspection agency.

2. Overarching Purpose

The purpose of the review and challenge cycle is to drive improvement in learner outcomes whilst acting as one of the formal mechanisms of communication between consortia and Welsh Government. The meetings will fulfil a threefold set of objectives – they will challenge progress and outcomes, provide assurance and act as a vehicle to identify practice that should be shared across the regions:-

- Challenge consortia’s progress against:
o the outcome measures and priorities noted in their annual business plans;
o implementation of the National Model, and;
o progress against national priorities and targets set out in Qualified for Life.

- Provide assurance in respect of:
  o the sustainability of regional practices with a specific focus on embedding school to school working;
  o the accountability and scrutiny mechanisms that exist between each consortium and their constituent Local Authorities;
  o provide assurance to the Minister for Education and Skills on the consortia’s regional committees on the quality of regional arrangements and the outcomes achieved.

- identify effective practice for sharing.

The cycle will be a two-way process and officials will take action where issues are raised in respect of the Department’s operations which are affecting, or have the potential to affect, the region’s ability to work effectively.

The review and challenge meetings will promote a clear focus on key outcomes, and progress against priorities. A four stage approach to each of the meetings will create a multi-layered review and challenge cycle with an emphasis on collaboration. The intention is to ensure clarity in terms of accountability and the need to deliver improvements.
The Review and Challenge Cycle

3. Spring review purpose

To undertake a strategic review of:-
- the progress made in the implementation of the previous years’ regional business plan and consideration of any emerging issues;
- consideration of the regional self evaluation in respect of current performance;
- consideration of the regional headline business plan for the current year;
- as necessary review any outstanding elements of the National Model for Regional Working (e.g. HR, Governor Support developments, Challenge Advisor Training and performance management, and target setting for learner outcomes (progress towards this year’s targets);

**Anticipated outcome**

Assurance that:-
- each consortium has developed and implemented a consistent and embedded self assessment and planning process;
- that the headline business plan and key outcomes are in line with the key WG priorities and align to Ministerial expectations;
- effective scrutiny is in place to drive and support improvement of learner outcomes.

4. Summer review purpose

To undertake a strategic review of:-
- any lines of enquiry identified from the final consortium business plans;
- risk management;
- and for summer 2015 include consideration of the Welsh Audit Office and ESTYN remit recommendations.

**Anticipated outcome**

Assurance that:-
- each consortium has effectively identified areas for development and are actively addressing these issues;
- the detailed operational plans for key areas (identified in advance) are in line with the headline business plans and demonstrate that strong planning processes and controls are in place.

5. Autumn review purpose

To undertake:-
a detailed review of performance and learner outcomes at each key stage of learning: Foundation Phase; Key stages two; three; and four;
o formal assessment against the targets outlined in the consortium business plan and actual/provisional learner outcomes;
o to ensure the consortium are addressing key national priorities such as Literacy, Numeracy and narrowing the gap.

## Anticipated outcome

Assurance that:-
- the targets for learner outcomes and achievement within the consortium business plan have been achieved or exceed;
- effective scrutiny is in place to drive and support improvement of learner outcomes.

## 6. Structure

To establish effective dialogue, and building on the principals of effective self-evaluation, the formal review and challenge meetings will be focused on issues of strategic importance. There are four stages to each of the 3 review sessions of the review and challenge cycle.

- **Stage one - Intelligence gathering** WG, Estyn, WLGA & with key stakeholders/partners. This will be an internal process and data when appropriate will then be shared with each consortium in order for them to add to it based upon their own intelligence and self-evaluation. This will be shared at the end of stage one and before stage two. This will provide focus for stage two discussions.

- **Stage two - Collective pre-meet** with the four Consortium Managing Directors, four Lead Directors, WLGA and WG to confirm the specific issues for discussion at the review and challenge meeting.

- **Stage three - Formal review and challenge meeting.** The meeting will be constructive dialogue aimed at identifying progress and areas for improvement at a regional level.

- **Stage four - Post event meeting and follow up.** There will be a meeting between WG, the Consortium Managing Director and Lead Director shortly after the formal meeting. This will provide initial feedback, prior to the formulation of formal outcomes and actions.
7. Membership

Each of the stages of the event will require different attendees.

- **Stage one. Intelligence gathering session**
  (Internal to Welsh Government)
  - Chair - Dr Brett Pugh, Group Director, School Standards and Workforce
  - Welsh Government officials and expert secondee team members
  - Estyn representatives with an observer role
  - One WLGA representative with an observer role

- **Stage two. Collective pre-meet**
  - WG officials and educational expert secondee team members
  - Four Regional Consortium Managing Directors
  - Four Regional Lead Directors of Education
  - Four Lead Chief Executives
  - One WLGA representative with an observer role

- **Stage three. Review and challenge meeting**.
  (attendance will vary depending on the point in the cycle, Spring/Summer/Autumn)

  **Spring:-**
  - Chair - Dr Brett Pugh, Group Director, School Standards and Workforce
  - Jo-Anne Daniels, Group Director Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and Learner Support
  - Steve Vincent, Deputy Director, Schools Management and Effectiveness
  - Consortium Managing Director
  - Consortium Assistant Managing Director
  - Lead Director
  - Chair of the Joint Committee
  - Lead Chief Executive
  - Chair of the Advisory Board
- One Estyn representative with an observer role.
- One WLGA representative with an observer role.
- Expert Secondee
- Secretariat

**Summer:-**

- Chair - Dr Brett Pugh, Group Director, School Standards and Workforce
- Jo-Anne Daniels, Group Director Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and Learner Support
- Steve Vincent, Deputy Director, Schools Management and Effectiveness
- Consortium Managing Director
- Consortium Assistant Managing Director
- Lead Director
- Chair of the Joint Committee
- Lead Chief Executive
- Chair of the Advisory Board
- One Estyn representative with an observer role
- One WLGA representative with an observer role
- Expert Secondee
- Secretariat
- *additional Local Authority Directors of Education as/if the agreed agenda highlights an issue for discussion in respect of individual or all LAs (this will be agreed at the stage 2 pre-meeting)*

**Autumn:-**

- Chair – Huw Lewis Minister for Education and Skills
- Dr Brett Pugh, Group Director, School Standards and Workforce
- Jo-Anne Daniels, Group Director Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and Learner Support
- Steve Vincent, Deputy Director, Schools Management and Effectiveness
- Chair of the Regional Executive Board (assumed to be member of Regional Joint Committee).
- Consortium Managing Director
- Consortium Assistant Managing Director
- Chair of the Regional Executive Board
- Local Authority Directors of Education as appropriate (this will be agreed at the stage 2 pre-meeting)
- Expert Secondee
- One Estyn representative with an observer role.
- One WLGA representative with an observer role
- Secretariat

- Stage four. Post event meeting

- WG officials and expert secondee(s)
- Consortium Managing Director and Lead Director
- Lead Chief Executive

8. Meeting arrangements

Frequency
There will be three review and challenge meetings each year. These will take place in Spring, Summer and Autumn. One of the review and challenge meetings each year will be chaired by the Minister for Education and Skills. It is anticipated that for 2015 this will continue to be the autumn term meeting.

Agenda and supporting information
There will be a series of set agendas for each of the meetings agreed in advance with consortia and aligned with the regional business plans.

To support the meetings a common set of information will be produced in collaboration between Welsh Government, Estyn and consortia. This will be agreed in conjunction with the content of the agenda.

Arrangements for the formal review and challenge meeting (Stage three)
Following the collective pre-meet (stage two), Welsh Government will share the emerging lines of enquiry with the consortium eight working days before the review and challenge meeting. This will include all presentations in both English and Welsh.

Consortia will put in place practical arrangements for the formal review and challenge meeting, including simultaneous interpretation facilities as required. Welsh Government will be responsible for making a formal record of the meeting.
9. Reporting

Priorities and actions agreed as a result of the review and challenge sessions will be actioned by consortia and local authorities as appropriate and be reflected in the business plans for the next 12 months. The implementation of these actions will be supported by ongoing dialogue with the Expert Secondee and Welsh Government officials.

A statement outlining the key outcomes, issues and risks for each region will be prepared within five working days of the final formal review and challenge event. This will then be presented to the Minister for Education and Skills.

10. Review

These terms of reference will be reviewed in March 2016 in conjunction with a review of the overall review cycle and the approval of Regional Business Plans for 2015/16.
Review and Challenge Cycle 2015

Spring
(Feb/March)
Self Assessment
Head line Business plan

Summer
(June/July)
Final Business plan - Lines of enquiry
Risk Management
Implementation of the ESTYN & WAO Remit recommendations

Autumn
(October)
Ministerial - Headteacher event
Learner outcomes
Impact