

Report

Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 9 March 2022

Subject Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2022-2025

Purpose To seek Cabinet views on the EAS Business Plan 2022-2025 (Consultation Version – Accessible)

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Ward All

Summary This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2022-2025. The EAS delivers, through this agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes. This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2022-2025

Proposal Cabinet are requested to:

- Receive the report for information and take the opportunity to comment on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process; and
- Consider the main strengths and areas for development within Newport, and to consider how LA services can be aligned with the priorities contained within the document, therefore ensuring all pupils meet their full potential.

Action by The Education Achievement Service in partnership with the Local Authority

Timetable The Business Plan will commence from 1 April 2022

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Sarah Morgan (Chief Education Officer)
- Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships (2nd February 2022)

Signed

Background

- 1.1 The EAS delivers, through an agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.
- 1.2 Joint Executive Group (JEG) Members agreed that the EAS should move to a 3-year Business Plan model with a detailed annual update for Members to agree as per the requirements within the Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA). Prior to the consultation version of the Business Plan being completed a series of 'Visioning Sessions' have been held with all key partners invited to attend.
- 1.3 As an organisation we have reviewed how we have written the Business Plan and communicated this to our partners. We decided it was timely to review and adapt this process and to make it more accessible to a wider audience. We have used the 'Theory of Change' approach to help us articulate the changes and impact we want to make as the regional school improvement service for South-East Wales and the connections and actions needed that will allow that change and impact to be successfully achieved. This Business Plan spans a three-year period and will receive annual reviews each year.
- 1.4 However, this plan also considers how schools and educational settings continue to face the challenges of the pandemic. The EAS will remain sensitive and responsive to the needs of the workforce and will continue to be a highly supportive, reflective, and responsive organisation.
- 1.5 The EAS will build upon what has worked well during this period, particularly the aspects of our role that have been successful within the virtual environment. The support that the EAS will offer will fully align to the expectations set by local authorities, Welsh Government (WG) and links to emerging research. The pandemic has reminded us that positive change is and has been possible. Schools, settings and the EAS have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working and delivering meaningful learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences should be built upon to avoid a 'snap back,' keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time.
- 1.6 Members are asked to take the opportunity to comment on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process and provide a written response as appropriate
- 1.7 Please note that a mid-year evaluation of the current revised Covid Business Plan (2021/22) has been submitted to each of the EAS governance groups and has been available for local authorities to share as appropriate within their own democratic processes. Within the context of evolving accountability arrangements and the Covid-19 Pandemic, school and aggregate LA performance data has not been available for presentation to this committee. A separate paper detailing the implications of this has been provided to local authorities.
- 1.8 The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and trends within Newport will continue to be met through bespoke work with each school, both virtually and when safe to do so physically.
- 1.9 The EAS will offer an evolving Professional Learning Offer (PLO) to all schools and settings across the region, in order to meet development needs as we emerge from the pandemic. We will continue to fund schools (grant permitting) to deliver a large proportion of the professional learning activity, where appropriate virtually.
- 1.10 All schools will continue to be provided with a bespoke support package that compliments the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs) in line with the levels of

support they require. There is a degree of flexibility within the deployment model to allow for in-year changes in circumstances and to allow for changes in light of the pandemic.

- 1.11 The centralised model of service delivery that has been adopted across the South East Wales region has enabled efficiencies to be realised, economies of scale to be secured, particularly in relation to avoiding duplication of functions and the ability to secure a range of educational expertise within the region.
- 1.12 The talent and expertise that resides in schools within and beyond the region is incentivised and used effectively to support professional learning and school improvement activity. There has been inevitable fragility in the ability of schools to offer support beyond their own settings because of the pandemic, this situation will be managed with sensitivity and will be constantly reviewed.
- 1.13 For sustained school improvement to happen it is essential that all partners work together more closely than ever recognising that each partner (school, LA and EAS) has its role to play in providing support to secure improvements.
- 1.14 The Business Plan is in the consultation process. The draft business plan was created following feedback provided in a broad range of 'Visioning Sessions'. These virtual and physical meetings were offered to a range of stakeholder groups including, headteachers, governors and elected member. Feedback has been incorporated within the plan.
- 1.14 In addition the specific list of consultees are noted below.
 - EAS staff
 - Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
 - Regional Joint Executive Group
 - EAS Company Board
 - EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
 - All Headteachers from within the region
 - All Chairs of Governors from within the region
 - School Councils from within the region
 - All school based Professional Learning Leads
 - EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)
- 1.15 The final version of the Business Plan will be supported by a range of supporting documents:
 - Detailed Business Plan 2022–2023
 - Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2022–2023 (to follow once detailed received from WG)
 - Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
 - EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
 - Regional Professional Learning Offer 2022–2023
 - Local Authority Strategic Education Plans

The Theory of Change approach

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

Why?

1.17 “The visions we offer our children shape the future. It matters what those visions are. Often, they become self-fulfilling prophecies. Dreams are maps.” Carl Sagan.

South East Wales Vision 2025

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

EAS Vision 2025

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

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

1.20 All schools will be able to access a universal offer of professional learning support in each of the following areas: School Improvement, Leadership and Teaching, Curriculum for Wales, Health Wellbeing and Equity and School Governors which are intrinsically linked. As well as a holistic professional learning offer, this will include a set number of days to work with their School Improvement Partner (SIP) and a professional dialogue with the EAS and LA to agree and or amend improvement priorities and support requirements as part of an annual professional discussion.

1.21 In addition to the universal offer, schools will be able to access specific and targeted support as determined through ongoing professional discussion with their SIP and in line with their school improvement priorities. This professional learning support may be related to a task and finish activity, an option for further work with their SIP or an option for peer working.

1.22 Bespoke support will also be available for schools who require more intensive support. This could include more support from the SIP or the use of a Learning Network School to School Partnership.

School Improvement: Bespoke support to schools and settings aligned to need. Create and facilitate collaborative networks of professional practice.		
Leadership and teaching Professional learning and support for the development of leadership and teaching across the entire workforce.	Curriculum for Wales Professional learning and support for Curriculum for Wales.	Health, Wellbeing and Equity Professional learning and support for health, wellbeing, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
Governors: Provide a broad range of professional learning and support for Governors.		

These activities are explained in detail in the full Business Plan.

What are the foundations that enable activities to take place?

1.23 The EAS needs to have the following elements in place to enable the activities above. These are the foundations of the organisation:

- Agile, timely and responsive.
- Sensitive, flexible, and empathetic to system needs.
- The way we work is informed, drawing on research from a global perspective.
- Welcome challenge and review.
- Effective systems and processes for self-evaluation, risk, and financial management.

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

What will be the impact?

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.25 There are many ways of capturing and sharing what the EAS does which are exemplified in this model as outputs. The progress on the implementation and impact of the Business Plan will be reported to the Joint Executive Group and Company Board. These reports, as in previous years, will be suitable for scrutiny activity at local authority and national level. In addition, the progress made towards the implementation of key actions will be reported at each meeting of the Joint Executive Group and Company Board. This approach will be aligned to the national changes in the accountability system.

2. Risks

2.1 In writing this plan a number of assumptions have been made. If these are not in place, then they become a risk to the successful delivery of this plan. The EAS risk register will be reviewed and refined following the agreement of the final EAS Business Plan. These are:

- Operate with integrity, honesty and objectivity.
- Partners understand our role in the education system.
- Professional learning has a positive impact on practice and behaviour.
- We are one part of the much wider system.
- Schools / education settings positively engage with us.
- Schools / education settings use funding effectively.
- We have the capacity and resources to undertake our activity effectively.
- When the conditions in a school / education setting can secure improvement, readiness for support results in positive change.
- Our partners provide us with timely and appropriate information.
- We work with schools / education settings to ensure priorities for improvement are based on robust, accurate self-evaluation.

2.1.1 These risks are mitigated through the identification of priorities as seen in the priority areas above and within the detailed within the EAS Business Plan, Newport LA Plans and the Education Strategic Plan.

2.2 Newport LA will have its own risks linked to the delivery of the strategic objectives within their corporate plans.

3. Resource Implications

3.1 Section 4 of the Business Plan details the EAS activities for 2022-2023 and Section 5 details the governance and financial arrangements. Indicative LA Core Contributions have been added into this section. The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by the Articles of Association and a Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA). These governance documents essentially link the five Local Authorities to the EAS both operationally and through the commissioning of regional school improvement services.

3.2 The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, regional school improvement grants and a service level agreement for governor support services. A spending plan accompanies this Business Plan which is intrinsically linked to all actions contained within it. A detailed overview of the regional distribution of all grants is available for all schools to view and compare allocations and rates of delegation through the regional grant monitoring tool. As recipients of public funding, it is important that budgets are allocated and spent wisely. The EAS will continually strive to provide value for money through the optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes.

3.3 The delegation rate to schools increased to 95.5% in 2021/22, whilst the EAS staff profile has reduced by 53.1% since 2012.

3.4 The local authority's indicative core contribution for 2022/23 are as follows: Newport LA's contribution for 2022/23 is £783,291, compared to £787,227 in 2021/22, £803,293 in 2020/21 and £815,526 in 2019/20.

3.5 At the time of writing this report, there is uncertainty with regards to the regional grant funding from WG for 2022/2023. As a result of the pandemic, it is likely that there will continue to be reductions in the regional grant profile. When the grant position has been confirmed the EAS detailed delivery plan will be updated accordingly.

4. Consultation

1.1. The Business Plan is in the consultation process. The Consultees are noted below:

- EAS staff
- Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors

- Regional Joint Executive Group
- EAS Company Board
- EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
- All Headteachers from within the region
- All Chairs of Governors from within the region
- School Councils from within the region
- All school based Professional Learning Leads
- EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)

Risks

2.1 In writing this plan a number of assumptions have been made. If these are not in place, then they become a risk to the successful delivery of this plan. The EAS risk register will be reviewed and refined following the agreement of the final EAS Business Plan. These are:

- Operate with integrity, honesty and objectivity.
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- We work with schools / education settings to ensure priorities for improvement are based on robust, accurate self-evaluation.

2.2 These risks are mitigated through the identification of priorities as seen in the priority areas above and within the detailed within the EAS Business Plan, Newport LA Plans and the Education Strategic Plan.

2.3 Newport LA will have its own risks linked to the delivery of the strategic objectives within their corporate plans.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The EAS Business Plan supports the Education Service Plan, the PSB Wellbeing Plan and the NCC Covid Recovery Plan.

Options Available and considered

- Accept the EAS Business Plan 2022 - 2025
- Request amendments to the EAS Business Plan 2022-2025

Preferred Option and Why

- Accept the EAS Business Plan 2022-2025 following consultation with a range of partners

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no specific financial issues contained within this report as it focuses on the EAS business plan and how it aligns with the Council's priorities for schools and education.

The report usefully outlines the latest projected funding contributions to the EAS from the Council and thus will be used to inform the Council medium term financial plans.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report. The EAS Business Plan reflects national priorities and standards for educational improvement and the final Business Plan will be approved as an EAS strategic document by the Company Board and the Joint Executive Group. The draft Business Plan has already been the subject of extensive consultation with key stakeholder, including Performance Scrutiny Committee (Partnerships). Cabinet are being asked to confirm that the specific elements of the plan properly reflect and are correctly aligned to the priorities for school improvement as set out in Newport's Education Strategic Plan.

Newport City Council recognises that it is our duty to work with partners such as the EAS to provide future generations with the skills and knowledge they need to play a full and active role in their communities and wider society. Both Newport's and the nation's economic prosperity, social cohesion, and wellbeing are built on the foundations of a strong, fair and effective education system. The EAS Business Plan for 2022-25 sets out a vision and range of activities, support services and framework to drive school improvement and raise pupil attainment whilst closing the gap between learners from different socio-economic backgrounds.

As required the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has been considered in this report and the EAS will play a part in creating a more equal and more prosperous Wales.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

Newport City Council recognises that it is our duty to work with partners such as the EAS to provide future generations with the skills and knowledge they need to play a full and active role in their communities and wider society. Both Newport's and the nation's economic prosperity, social cohesion, and wellbeing are built on the foundations of a strong, fair and effective education system. The EAS Business Plan for 2022-25 sets out a vision and range of activities, support services and framework to drive school improvement and raise pupil attainment whilst closing the gap between learners from different socio-economic backgrounds.

As required the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has been considered in this report and the EAS will play a part in creating a more equal and more prosperous Wales.

Scrutiny Committees

The draft EAS Business Plan was examined by Partnerships Scrutiny on 2nd February 2022.

- The Committee thanked the officers for attending and complimented the Business Plan as very clear in their goals with a good understanding. Members were pleased to see that the partnership is still healthy. Members were also happy with the information contained within the report and wished to feedback that the Business Plan read a lot better to previous reports.
- The Committee wished to request for the partners to keep them apprised of any key changes.
- Members were pleased to hear that the partnership have been liaising with school councils offering the vision feedback for learner voices and that it will be incorporated into the final report.

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

A fairness and equality impact assessment has been completed in relation to this draft business plan and is provided as a background paper.

Summary of Impact: Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

All local authorities have a long-term duty to develop a prosperous Wales by developing skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities. Enabling and facilitating academic attainment for all learners provides a foundation for access to employment and helps break a cycle of deprivation.

Furthermore, regardless of the socio-economic demographic of an individual school community, all schools will be challenged and supported to improve pupil attainment with a view to create “more equal wales” that enables pupils to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. A specific focus of the draft EAS Business Plan is improving the attainment of vulnerable learners and closing the gap in attainment between those learners eligible for free school meals and those not eligible for free school meals.

Improvement of pupil outcomes is supported by collaboration of schools, the Local Authority and the regional school improvement service (EAS) including the involvement of pupils, teachers, governors and wider community members in the planning and implementation of school improvement initiatives.

Summary of Impact: Equality Act 2010

The EAS delivers, through an agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes. Plan priorities include:

- Ensuring that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remains paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
- Continuing to provide support to school leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by school closures.

Socio-economic Duty

The business plan proactively supports the reduction of inequalities in education that may arise as a result of socio-economic disadvantage. the plan describes a range of support for schools related to reducing socio-economic impact, particularly for learners who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) or those who are children looked after (CLA).

Summary of Impact: Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

All schools are required to promote Welsh culture and heritage through the Cwricwlwm Cymreig and to ensure that pupils are able to learn and practice the Welsh Language. Support for both is a key strand of the business plan.

Consultation

The EAS Business Plan is currently undergoing consultation with all Local Authorities within the South East Wales Consortium (SEWC)

Background Papers

The South-East Wales Regional Mission: Business Plan (2020-2021) (First Draft for Consultation)
Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment

Dated: 16th February 2022