



**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

GWŶS I GYFARFOD O'R CYNGOR

C.Hanagan
Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a Chyfathrebu
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Taf
Y Pafiliynau
Parc Hen Lofa'r Cambrian
Cwm Clydach CF40 2XX

Dolen gyswllt: Claire Hendy – Uwch Swyddog Gwasanaethau Democrataidd (07385 401935)

DYMA WŶS I CHI i gyfarfod o **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU - PLANT A PHOBL IFAINC** yn cael ei gynnal yn **Rhithwir** ar **DYDD MERCHER, 24AIN CHWEFROR, 2021** am **5.00 PM**.

Caiff Aelodau nad ydyn nhw'n aelodau o'r pwyllgor ac aelodau o'r cyhoedd gyfrannu yn y cyfarfod ar faterion y cyfarfod er bydd y cais yn ôl doethineb y Cadeirydd. Gofynnwn i chi roi gwybod i Wasanaethau Democrataidd erbyn Dydd Llun, 22 Chwefror 2021 trwy ddefnyddio'r manylion cyswllt uchod, gan gynnwys rhoi gwybod a fyddwch chi'n siarad Cymraeg neu Saesneg.

AGENDA

Tudalennau

1. CROESO AC YMDDIHEURIADAU

Croesawu Aelodau a derbyn unrhyw ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb

2. DATGANIADAU O FUDDIANT

Derbyn datganiadau o fuddiannau personol gan Aelodau, yn unol â gofynion y Cod Ymddygiad.

Nodwch:

1. Mae gofyn i Aelodau ddatgan rhif a phwnc yr agendwm mae eu buddiant yn ymwneud ag ef a mynegi natur y buddiant personol hwnnw; a
2. Lle bo Aelodau'n ymneilltuo o'r cyfarfod o ganlyniad i ddatgelu buddiant sy'n rhagfarnu, rhaid iddyn nhw roi gwybod i'r Cadeirydd pan fyddan nhw'n gadael.

3. COFNODION

Derbyn cofnodion cyfarfod blaenorol y Pwyllgor Craffu – Plant a Phobl Ifainc a gynhaliwyd ar 13 Ionawr 2021.

5 - 12

ADRODDIAD Y CYFARWYDDWR ADDYSG A GWASANAETHAU CYNHWYSIANT

4. ADRODDIAD AR WAITH CONSORTIWM CANOLBARTH Y DE YN Y RHANBARTH AC AWDURDOD LLEOL RHONDDA CYNON TAF (EBRILL 2019 – MEDI 2020)

Trafod gwaith Consortiwm Canolbarth y De (CSC) yn codi safonau mewn ysgolion yn Rhondda Cynon Taf

13 - 54

5. DIWEDDARIAD SEFYLLFA'R SECTOR GORFAL PLANT YN RHCT

Derbyn adroddiad mewn perthynas a darpariaeth gyfredol yn y sector gofal plant yn RhCT

55 - 62

6. ADOLYGIAD Y CADEIRYDD A DOD Â'R CYFARFOD I BEN

. Adlewyrchu ar y cyfarfod a'r camau gweithredu i'w dwyn ymlaen.

7. MATERION BRYD

Trafod unrhyw faterion sydd, yn ôl doethineb y Cadeirydd, yn faterion brys yng ngoleuni amgylchiadau arbennig.

Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a Chyfathrebu

Cylchreliad:-

(Y Cynghorwyr Bwrdeistref Sirol Y Cynghorydd S. Rees-Owen a Y Cynghorydd J Edwards – Cadeirydd ac Is-gadeirydd, yn y drefn honno)

Y Cynghorwyr Bwrdeistref Sirol:

Y Cynghorydd S.Evans, Y Cynghorydd J Brencher, Y Cynghorydd H Fychan, Y Cynghorydd A Calvert, Y Cynghorydd S Powell, Y Cynghorydd M Powell, Y Cynghorydd M Griffiths, Y Cynghorydd Owen-Jones, Y Cynghorydd S Morgans, Y Cynghorydd G Stacey, Y Cynghorydd L De Vet and Y Cynghorydd L Walker

Aelodau Cyfetholedig:

Mr M Cleverley, Cynrychiolydd Cymdeithas Genedlaethol yr Ysgolfeistri ac Undeb yr Athrawesau a'r Panel Athrawon

Mr J Fish, Cynrychiolydd Rhiant-Lywodraethwr wedi'i ethol

Ms A Jones, Cynrychiolydd UNITE

Mr C Jones, Cynrychiolydd GMB

Mrs C Jones, Cynrychiolydd Undeb Cenedlaethol yr Athrawon a'r Panel Athrawon
Mr D Price, Cynrychiolydd UNSAIN/UNISON
Mr A Ricketts, Cynrychiolydd Awdurdodau Esgobaethol â'r hawl i bleidlais
Mrs R Nicholls, Cynrychiolydd Rhiant-Lywodraethwr wedi'i ethol
Mr L Patterson, Cynrychiolydd Rhiant-Lywodraethwr wedi'i ethol

Tudalen wag



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on
Wednesday, 13 January 2021 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor J Edwards	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor A Calvert	Councillor S Powell
Councillor M Powell	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor L De Vet
Councillor L Walker	

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor C Leyshon, Councillor L Hooper, Councillor J James and Councillor W Lewis

38 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S Evans, H Fychan and Co-opted Member R Nicholls.

39 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

40 Consultation Links

The Chair referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny website'. The Chair reminded Members that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee,

which are circulated on a monthly basis by the Scrutiny Research Officer.

41 Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative 2019/20

The Chair welcomed the Regional Adoption Manager, Vale Valley's & Cardiff Collaboration to the Committee and invited her to present the Annual Report for 2019-2020.

The Regional Adoption Manager thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present the report and explained that this was the fifth annual report and covers the period 1 April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

It was explained that the report seeks to combine the reporting requirements set out in regulation and governance arrangements for the region in one report.

The Regional Adoption Manager explained that the report has the following appendices which are as follows:

1. Key Performance data in respect of children by quarter and local authority;
2. Information in respect of adopters enquires and recruitment of adopters;
3. Information in respect of the Adoption Support ; and
4. Information in respect of Adoption Panel activity

The Officer continued to highlight that the organisational and managerial structure of the service has remained the same during this period with service delivery structured around three functional teams. The officer continued to explain that as Part of Welsh Government award of £2.3M to improve adoption services in Wales, the region received a substantial investment of which enabled the service to recruit a number of posts across the service. Members were informed of the new posts and how it enabled service improvements across the region.

The Regional Adoption Manger continued and provided Members with an overview of performance measures against each of the service functions in respect of 'Family Findings' the officer explained that this still remains a key area of activity for the region and the ability to place children effectively and promptly underpins all other activities.

It was brought to Members attention the total number of children referred for adoption totalled 143 which marks a 34% decrease on the previous year it was highlighted that this is a trend across Wales and reason for this varies and will reflect the work being undertaken by local authorities to reduce the children looked after numbers in Wales as directed by Welsh Government.

Members were also informed of the number of withdrawn referrals and it was explained that permanency plans is the main aim for children within service. It was again highlighted that 88% of the children who were withdrawn from adoption had either a positive parenting or positive connect person's assessment.

The Committee were presented with an overview of the number of Should be adopted figure along with the number of Placement Order and Adoption Orders which have been made over the last 12 month period.

An overview of the life journey work was explained to the Committee and

Members were informed how additional post would improve the overall transition experiences for children and families going forward.

The work of the adoption panel was also presented to the Committee and Members were informed of any complaints and compliments that had been received of the year.

In concluding her report the Regional Adoption Manager explained the priorities of the VVC. She explained that significant progress has been made by raising the profile of the region as a result of a consistent marketing strategy and this has produced results in attracting more enquires from prospective adopter. Other areas of positive improvements have been seen in adoption support. In respect of challenges the officer stated that in order to develop the service needs to work to ensure that enquires made to the service are converted into positive placement choices.

Finally it was highlighted that prior to the end of reporting period the impact of the pandemic and national lockdown was beginning to take effect with staff working from home and key services temporarily halted.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and opened up the meeting for Members questions and observations.

A Member commented that the service that is being provided is exceptional for young children to move forward in life. In relation to point 4 of the report the Member asked whether figure 143 (the number of children referred for adoption) is related to the whole region or Rhondda Cynon Taf only. Clarity was also sought in respect of 4.3 of the report as to how many children were being referred to in the 41% withdrawals.

It was explained the figure 143 was relating to the whole of the region the officer explained Appendix 1 of the report describes the referrals for the LA's per month. In respect of the withdrawal figures Officers would need to clarify the details and report back after the meeting.

A Member stated it was pleasing to hear the number of families applying for adoption has improved and asked once approved how long does the approval last. It was explained that the approval lasts for two years before being reviewed

Members put further questions to the Officer in respect of referral times, life story work along with Members concerns over the Covid 19 pandemic and the barriers the service faced and continued to face.

Officer explained that the pandemic had an initial impact as staff were working from home and key services had temporarily halted. The officer ensued and explained that service quickly adapted to the challenges and this enabled the key functions of the service to continue.

After further discussion Members thanked the officers for a very informative report and **RESOLVED** to :

- Acknowledge the content of the report;
- Receive a report at a future meeting;
- Provide Members with a breakdown of the number of adoption withdrawals.

42 Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the Committee and asked her to kindly present the Annual Corporate Parenting Board Report for 2019-20.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services explained that it was felt that it would be beneficial for the Children and Young People Scrutiny to have sight of the report, in order to further aid transparency and continue the good synergy between Scrutiny and the Board.

The Cabinet Member continued to explain that on the 30th July 2020 the Corporate Parenting Board approved the Annual Report for 2019-20 Municipal year.

Members were informed that due to the COVID-19 pandemic a number of scheduled meetings of the Board were cancelled during the year and a number of reports detailed within its work programme were postponed to the following Municipal Year. At this point the Cabinet Member thanked the whole Service for the work that had been carried out throughout these unprecedented times.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services highlighted a vast range of reports the Board had considered some of which are as follows:

- Overview of the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service;
- CIW Inspection ;
- Miskin Annual Report;
- Bright Spots Survey Findings and many more.

Members acknowledged the key elements the Board had agreed to focus on for the next Municipal year. The Cabinet Member invited the Director of Children's Services to provide Members with further detail in respect of the work carried out by the Service and highlighted the continuing work the service will deliver to ensure the needs of the children and young people are met in the Looked After System.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and put forward their questions and observations.

A Member asked if the Committee could receive more information in relation to the 16+ age group and especially the care leaver, could data be provided on a breakdown of areas to young people in this area

Officers replied accommodation 16+ for young people bring back a report, exist

from carer remaining in when I'm ready placements. Priority in to this area housing colleagues happy to meet and take this forward at a pace.

Another Member of the Committee commented on the distribution of the Pupil Development Grant and brought Officers attention to the heading which needed to be changed to from Pupil Deprivation Grant to Development Grant for clarity. It was agreed that this would be amended within the report before it being presented to Cabinet.

In respect of the Bright Spots Survey a Member asked how the service was dealing with the recommendations that were set out in the improvement plans and commented that it would be good to have this information at a later date.

In response the Director of Children's Services explained that in respect of the Bright Spots Survey findings, a meeting takes place every other month and this is addressed in a Quality Assurance report is taken forward.

Members wanted to congratulate for the YEPS service for the hard work the service has provided during the pandemic especially the street work.

Another Member asked for a report on where YEPS service is at present and how it has been affective during lockdown and also what plans are there for young people and the service coming out of lockdown how we manage their anxiety.

The Chair brought the Group Director into conversation to give view and explain how he thought this could be brought back to the Committee The Group Director explained that as thing start to improve a report could be brought back in respect of the recovery around Children's Services.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that the work that has been carried out by the YEPS Service.

After further discussion Members RESOLVED to

- Acknowledge the work carried out by the Corporate Parenting Board;
- Amended the context of the Report to read (Pupil Development Grant);and
- Receive a Report at a future Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Recovery plan and lessons learned during the Covid -19 Pandemic.

43 Kinship Care (N.O.M)

The Chair informed Members that the purpose of the report brought before them and explained that at Council on the 29th July 2020 it was agreed that the following Notice of Motion would be referred to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for further consideration, the Chair continued and welcomed both County Borough Councillors James and Hooper to the Committee as Mover and Seconder of the Motion and explained that they would be given the opportunity to address the officers at the end of the debate. The Chair invited the Director of Children's Services to present the report.

It was explained that the Notice of Motion stated that;

“It is estimated that there are 200, 00 children being brought up by family members or friends in the United Kingdom in what is termed ‘Kinship Care’. These kinship carers have stepped in to care for children whose parents are unable to look after them and keep their families together, and it presents three times the number of children on the national foster care system – and is a growing figure. Kinship care is one of the main ways to provide a sense of security, continuity and belonging for children who cannot live with their parents and provides high levels of stability and enduring support well into adulthood. However, the support that is offered to kinship carers throughout the country lacks consistency, and carers often feel isolated, abandoned and ‘hung out to dry’. This is in marked contrast to support that foster carers and adoptive parents can receive.

At Council Members RESOLVED that:

This Council recognises the invaluable work that kinship carers do for their loved ones, often under the most trying of situations, and is committed to providing the help, engagement and support that they need. This Council requests that a report be considered by the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to look into the role of kinship care in the County Borough and to work closely with grandparents plus to identify ways in which it can meet the needs of kinship carers and those in kinship care.”

The Director went to explain that the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 sets out regulation that the local authority need to follow to ensure there is safe arrangements in place for a child.

It was explained that there are many ways a family member may become a carer for a child or young person some of which are:

- Special guardianship orders;
- Child arrangement orders; or
- Through approval as a kinship carer.

It was explained that the Children’s Services need to carry out intensive assessments and provide support for each child who is placed on any of these Orders.

The Director continued to explain that the Service has extended the range of support opportunities to family and friends’ carers over recent year to mirror those received by mainstream foster carers however it was explained that this has been slower in 2020/21 due to the impact of the pandemic. Members were provided with a list of what was available. Members were pleased to see that Children’s Services remains committed to developing packages of support to family and friend carers during 2021/2022

The Director highlighted the definition of a kinship carer and explained that the Service Manager Children Looked After Services has developed links with Grandparents Plus who has recently established their organisation in Wales for the first time.

The Director highlighted that newly appointed regional officer from Grandparents Plus has been invited to attend meetings with Children’s Services and carers to ensure these is more collaborative working.

Members were also provided with data relating to the number child who were in receipt of kinship Foster carer and Special Guardianship Orders.

In concluding her report the Director of Children's Services informed the Committee of the next step and opened up the floor for observations and questions.

Members put various questions in respect of kinship care one of which related to how relative carers manage the needs of the child and the needs of the parent and what was the difficulties and how was this being managed to ensure the child's safety.

In response the Director explained that safely managing contact with the birth parent was one of the main concerns of the carers the Director explained that there is a great deal of support available to carers to ensure the contact is as smooth as possible, it was also highlighted that training is available but offer the relatives do not identify them as carers and tend not to take up the offer however the ones that do find it very beneficial. Members were informed that the children have allocated social workers and keep in touch with the child, young person on a regular basis. If standards of care dropping despite support officer explained that sometime we have to move the children on to a safer environment but this is very few and far between.

A Member thanked the officer for the report and went on to stated that he was struggling to fund assurance in the motion and needed to establish whether the points within the Notice of Motion were found and thereby needed to be reacted to or not found

The Director explained that there had been no recent complaints or representation for kinship carer's regarding support for carers and this is considered as part quality assurance panel. The Director continued and stressed that when business less critical we will carry out a survey of our kinship carers to assess if there are any issues that need to be addressed and we can bring the findings back at to a future meeting.

The Chair welcomed County Borough Councillor J James the Mover of the Motion and County Borough L Hooper the Seconder of the Motion to put forward their questions and observations. The Members welcomed the opportunity to address the Committee in terms of context to the motion, he explained that from his understanding the issues of support payments for kinship carers was less than that for foster carers or adoptive parents.

The Member hoped that the authority would work with grandparents plus to address any issues going forward, it was asked if this work would be considered over a long term than a one of meeting.

In response to the questions the Director explained that any kinship carer that had been approved by the Local Authority would have the same right to any mainstream carer with regards to support such as social work support, the same support as any other Looked After Child, schools etc.

Another Member went on to state that there are many informal arrangements that go on between families such as grandparents, aunts & uncles taking on the parental role when it is not safe to stay in their family home. The Member felt that this would be a very interesting piece of work to carry out which could inform these carers that there is money available for them to support their families.

The Chair went on to ask Councillors Hooper if he has any questions for the officers. The Member stated that he felt there should have been a survey taken to see what concerns were out in the community and positive news grandparents plus has set up an office. Clearly it's a growing issue and this needs to be looked either as a whole committee or working group.

The Director of Children's Services wanted to clarify on the definition with regards to Kinship Care which is very different to informal care arrangements

After great discussion Members RESOLVED to:

- Acknowledge the content of the report;
- Receive results of any survey carried out with kinship carers at a later date.
- Invite the Mover and Seconder of the notice of motion back to the Committee when considering an future report.

44 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked Members and Officer for their contribution to the Committee and clarified that the next meeting would take place on the 27th January 2021 to consider the Education aspect of the Committee.

This meeting closed at 7.20 pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**



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 380¹ schools, 32% of Wales'

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. CONCLUSION

- 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

AS AMENDED BY

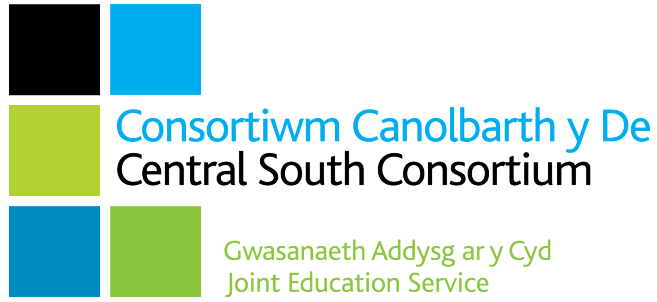
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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

<p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</p> <p>REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Report on the work of the Central South Consortium in the region and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authority April 2019 – September 2020</i></p>
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Author(s): - Steve Davies & Andy Hurley (Principal Improvement Partners)

Central South Consortium (Tel No. 01443 281400)

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 380¹ 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.

¹ School census results: as at January 2019.

- 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

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

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

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

The following schools achieved the Cymraeg Campus - Bronze Award:

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

- 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.

- Effective Challenge & Support (launched May 2020): 5 Governors completed.
- 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.
 - Statutory Training September 2018-March 2019 – Total Governors trained 117.
 - New Governor Induction: 63 Governors attended.
 - Understanding Data: 44 Governors attended.
 - New Chairperson induction: 1 Governors attended.
 - New Clerk Training: Delivered by LA, not CSC
 - Statutory Training September 2019-March 2020 – Total Governors trained 89.
 - New Governor Induction: 46 Governors attended.
 - Understanding Data: 31 Governors attended.
 - New Chairperson induction: 12 Governors attended.
 - 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:
 - Working with the ALN transformation lead to lead CSC schools through the transition.
 - Providing PL opportunities for all staff linked to vulnerable learners, including playlists and training from external professionals.
 - Dissemination of strategy documents linked to vulnerable learners.
 - Providing high level summaries of PDG plans linked to OECD DAC evaluation criteria.
 - 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:
 - All IPs and SAs have a clear understanding of how they challenge and support whole-school ALN strategic developments.
 - All IPs and SAs have increased understanding of what needs to be in place to secure whole-school leadership for ALN Transformation.
 - 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

- 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

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.

- Developing resources for A Level Spanish - Y Pant Comprehensive School.
 - Developing resources for GCSE Spanish - Y Pant Comprehensive School.
 - Developing boys' literacy: Writing across the Curriculum - Ysgol Bodringallt.
 - Developing a culture of Enquiry - Ysgol Llanhari, Ysgol Ty Coch.
 - Leadership of Foundation Phase – Dolau Primary, Brynnau Primary.
 - Teachers new to ALN Update – Ysgol Ty Coch.
- The following schools were identified as WG Pioneer Schools during 2019-20:
 - Abercynon Primary (Curriculum pioneers: Languages, Literacy and Communication).
 - Cardinal Newman (Curriculum pioneers: Science and Technology).
 - Treorchy Comprehensive School (PLPs).
 - Ysgol Garth Olwg (Curriculum pioneers: Expressive Arts).
 - Tai Education Centre (PLPs).
 - 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.
 - 79 primary schools are engaged with SIG activity.
 - 15 secondary schools are engaged with SIG activity.
 - Five special schools are engaged with SIG activity.
 - Ten convenors are from RCT. Some are joint convenors and share the role.
 - 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:

- Gwauncelyn Primary School
- Pontypridd High School
- Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun (x4)
- 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.

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 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 tailor-made 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.

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:
 - Work collaboratively with schools to complete the light touch questions regarding the engagement of learners.
 - 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.
 - Identify effective practice to inform and support regional guidance and models going forward.
 - 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.

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, £34,269² 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.

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

- 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:
 - To focus planning around the new Wales curriculum 2022 on Languages, Literacy and Communication AOLE.
 - To prioritise the teaching and learning of International Languages as part of this AOLE.
 - To target the plan at all Year 4 pupils within cluster primary schools from September 2019.
 - To focus on Spanish as the international language, taught in each cluster school by PHS staff.
 - To include broader learning opportunities that cover essential skills and link to other AOLES.
 - To plan assessments that meet expectations of the Progression Step 3.
- **Key Aim**
 - For an increased number of students at PHS to choose GCSE Spanish from September 2024.
 - Success criteria – Year 1 (2019/20).
 - 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.

- There has been improved oracy skills linked to language learning.
- Learning experiences linked to each AOLE have been delivered alongside the teaching of Spanish.
- Two whole year group transition events have been held at PHS to celebrate progress.
- Links with language specialists such as at USW have been used to support and enhance learning experiences.
- It is the intention to continue this programme of teaching through each of the next 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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.

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.

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	<p>Dialogue to focus initially on physical and emotional wellbeing of...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... head teacher • ... staff • ... pupils • ... families • ... groups of pupils • ... vulnerable pupils/pupils with ACEs <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A secure and safe school site</i> • <i>Well maintained buildings and resources</i> • <i>Dining facilities</i> • <i>Toilets</i> 	<p>As the school or setting moves out of early recovery and into a transitional period to stabilise, dialogue to focus upon:</p> <p>The physical and emotional wellbeing of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... head teacher • ... staff • ... pupils • ... families • ... groups of pupils • ... vulnerable pupils/pupils with ACEs • Parents and the wider school community <p>IP discussion should aim to establish, support and encourage confidence to move forward.</p> <p>Supportive dialogue and signposting where appropriate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, regional and national programmes and initiatives that will help the school to move forward towards stabilisation 	<p>As provision and learning stabilises, dialogue to focus on moving towards quality and effectiveness of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Spaces to play</i> • <i>Spaces to relax and socialise</i> • <i>Sports facilities</i> • <i>Toilet facilities</i> • <i>Spaces for counselling or other therapeutic work</i> <p>Has the school worked with the LA to review safeguarding procedures following the impact of COVID-19 and school closures?</p> <p>IPs should be signposting services offered by each individual LA</p>	<p>This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<p>Learning & Teaching</p>	<p>Dialogue to focus initially on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective discussion on lockdown provision • Lockdown engagement barriers/solutions/implications • Distance and blended learning strengths to build upon • Vulnerable learner engagement reflections and actions 	<p>During recovery, dialogue will likely focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>As provision for teaching and learning stabilises, dialogue to focus on moving towards quality and effectiveness of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • Meeting the needs of all learners • Vulnerable groups

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All learning having a clear purpose, focused around what is important for learners 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In secondary schools this will include focus on assessment and pupil readiness for external examinations 	
Leadership	<p>Dialogue to focus initially on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>As leaders reflect, evaluate and begin to identify the emerging priorities for their school, the Dialogue will likely focus upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)? 	<p>This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Schools will also likely be mindful of the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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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		<p>The involvement of leadership at all levels in line with their roles, responsibilities for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 learning 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.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 20/21

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24TH FEBRUARY 2021

UPDATE POSITION OF RCT CHILDCARE SECTOR

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the current position of the childcare sector in RCT and the support that has been offered by Education and Inclusion Services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the contents of this report.
- 2.2 Consider if any further information is required.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with an update on the pressures the childcare sector in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) is currently facing.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Section 22 of the Childcare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) places a duty on the Council to secure '*as far as is reasonably practicable*' sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents in its area who require childcare to enable them to take up, or remain in, work, or to undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

- 4.2 In order to execute this duty, the Council has a dedicated childcare development team to support all childcare settings in RCT. This support includes offering advice and guidance on statutory regulations, business planning and marketing, as well as offering training and CPD opportunities, administering a grant scheme and acting as a link between the sector and other council departments.
- 4.3 The universal childcare development team currently consists of two FTE posts. These posts transferred from Children's Services to Education & Inclusion Services in November 2018, joining officers who administer the Welsh Government Childcare Offer for Wales. This has enabled the Council to create a unified universal childcare development team. Another full-time post has been created and this officer is due to join the team at the end of February 2021.

5. UPDATE

- 5.1 The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been incredibly challenging for the childcare sector in RCT. Data from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) suggests that 18 registered settings permanently closed in RCT during the last year, the vast majority of these being childminders. Those that remain have adapted their settings physically to comply with protective measures and have adapted their workforce and working practices to ensure that they are as COVID-compliant as possible. They have continued to put the needs of the children at the fore of their practice and have supported both children and their families during this time.
- 5.2 In response to the national lockdown last March, Welsh Government instructed all childcare settings in Wales to close for all children, other than for those who were deemed vulnerable, or of critical workers. To support these parents, WG established the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme (C-CAS). This provided eligible children, aged from birth to four years, with fully funded childcare if there were no other caring options available to the families. The Education and Inclusion Service's childcare team took the lead with this scheme, with support from colleagues in Resilient Families Service. In total, 717 children accessed the scheme from March to August 2020, including 95 vulnerable children. 102 childcare settings participated in the scheme at various points throughout the period, including three of the council run Flying Start settings.
- 5.3 Below is a summary of the support that the childcare development team has offered to the sector over the last twelve months:
- 5.4 **Guidance and support**
The team has relayed Welsh Government, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Social Care Wales messages to the sector, offering further advice and guidance where necessary. During March 2020, the situation was continually changing at pace due to infection rates and the childcare team found that

providing up to date relevant information was incredibly challenging with various childcare settings, with some settings being more digitally competent. This was particularly the case in the week leading up to the schools closing and the instruction that the childcare sector was only to remain open for vulnerable children and those of critical workers.

Welsh Government advised that settings could start to reopen from June 2020 and issued a guidance document to support this - "Protective Measures in Childcare Settings: keep childcare safe". The RCT childcare team produced its own guidance document for the sector, summarising the protective measures guidance and including RCT relevant information and contact details. Version 1 of this local document was distributed in June 2020 and has been regularly updated since, as the situation and guidance has evolved. Version 6 of the guidance is currently being reviewed and will be distributed to the sector shortly.

As well as the RCT guidance document, the childcare team have created a Facebook closed group for providers in RCT. This has been well received and we currently have 104 members. This is now one of our main communication channels to advise providers of upcoming training and engagement events, as well as information about the Childcare Offer for Wales and umbrella organisation events. We supplement this communication with emails and telephone conversations, as no face to face visits are currently permitted.

Since September 2020, the childcare team have been able to restart a training programme. Prior to the start of the pandemic, the childcare team had established a training programme for the statutory training required by settings – Safeguarding, Paediatric First Aid and Food Hygiene. These were face to face training sessions, but are now online, with only the practical elements requiring a face to face session. As well as these three statutory courses, we have also been able to offer supplementary courses, such as Managing Challenging Behaviour, Manual Handling and Leadership & Management. Further courses are planned for 2021/22 based on feedback from the sector.

The Council's engagement calendar with the sector has also had to be rearranged from face to face sessions to online engagement. The second joint childcare and play conference, planned for October 2020, was cancelled. We hope to hold a rearranged conference this autumn, but this will be led by the rate of infection and the COVID restrictions in place at that time. The first online childcare engagement event, open to all childcare settings in RCT, is due to take place in February 2021. These will be scheduled to take place regularly throughout the year and will be led by the needs of, and feedback from, the sector.

5.5 Stakeholder feedback from the sector

A provider survey was undertaken in October 2020 to receive feedback and challenges from the sector and to ask what support would be helpful from the Council's childcare team. The results of the feedback included:

- When asked how concerned they were at the present time about their financial position, 53% responded that they were “somewhat concerned”, whilst 25% responded that they were “very concerned”.
- Concerns were a reduction in the number of children attending as more parents are working from home, or parents reducing the number of hours/days that they require. A reduction in numbers due to settings trying to maintain bubbles and limit contacts was also a factor.
- An increase in expenses, such as cleaning materials, uniform and general resources was also cited as a reason for the concern, as was the financial impact of positive cases in the setting.
- The final question asked what support they require from the childcare team, responses ranged from PPE/cleaning supplies, resources, support with increased overhead costs to networking forums and support with promotion. Many of these things were already in place at the time of the survey, and the other comments are being acted upon currently.

5.6 **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Childcare settings have told us that the added cost of ensuring their staff have sufficient PPE and cleaning products has been a concern to them. To support settings, the childcare development team has offered settings packs of PPE and cleaning products. These packs have included hand sanitiser, blue roll, Milton, facemasks, aprons, gloves, and face visors. The first round of packs was distributed in June 2020 for those settings that were open and providing emergency care. This was repeated in October 2020 once all childcare settings had reopened. A third round has just closed to applications. In total, we have provided 180 packs of PPE to settings in RCT so far. This support will continue into 2021/22 if providers tell us that the support is still required.

5.7 **Financial support**

The previous year has been very challenging for the childcare sector. Even for those that stayed open to provide emergency care, their income was substantially reduced compared to previous years. Welsh Government recognises this and is keen to support the sector to survive the current restrictions on their businesses. RCT has offered financial support via direct Welsh Government funding and the WG Children and Communities grant (childcare and play element). The Council has supported settings by:

- Administering a Welsh Government Childcare Provider Grant in the autumn of 2020. The criteria for this grant scheme was descriptive and was designed to support settings that saw a net reduction in income between April and June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. RCT was allocated £197,015.00. Of this, we were able to approve 7 applications, totalling £26,997.00. Three further applications were unsuccessful, as the applicants were unable to provide all the required evidence.

- In November 2020, WG made available further funding to support the sustainability of childcare settings via the Children and Communities Grant. RCT was allocated a further £165,312.00 on top of the childcare and play allocation for 2020/21. In RCT, the grant scheme has three sections that settings can apply for:
 - Support for settings that have full or partial closures due to positive COVID-19 cases.
 - Increased costs as a direct result of COVID-19, such as increased heating and cleaning costs. This section also supports settings that have been unable to open or run at full capacity due to issues with their venues (such as running from a community building and not having permission from the building committee to reopen).
 - Severe financial hardship due to reasons not covered in the first two sections and where no other public funding is available.

This grant scheme has been open for applications since December 2020 and to date, we have received 29 applications. 17 have been successful and a total of £52,762.40 has been awarded. Six have been unsuccessful and five are awaiting further information.

WG has indicated that there may be further funding available in this financial year to support sustainability of the sector. This has not been confirmed yet. The team are currently looking at other support packages they can put in place if this funding is received, such as resources packs, and support to purchase specialist cleaning equipment.

5.8 **Positive COVID-19 cases – impact on settings**

Most childcare settings started to reopen in June 2020. All settings are required to inform Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) of any positive COVID-19 cases amongst their staff or children attending, and to engage with Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) officers to identify close contacts. There were few of these instances during the summer, but from September onwards we saw a rise in positive cases in childcare settings. There is no legal obligation for childcare settings to inform the childcare team of positive cases, or of temporary partial/full closures. However, to assist the settings and the TTP team we created an online form that asks for the name of the setting, the date of the confirmed case, whether it was a member of staff or child, and the impact on the setting (partial or full closure, or no action). Settings are asked to complete this form and return to the childcare team. Details of the setting and the impact on the setting is shared with TTP, Flying Start and Resilient Families. No identifying information is collected, other than the name of the childcare setting. Despite there being no legal requirement for childcare providers to inform the childcare team, the form has been well received and the majority of positive cases are being reported. When a report is received, the childcare team contact the setting to offer support if required.

As of 22nd January 2021, the team have been notified of 53 positive cases. Of these, 34 were concerning staff members and 19 concerned children who attended the settings. These positive cases resulted in a full closure of the setting for a period of self-isolation in 23 cases, partial closures in 18 cases, and in 12 cases, only the positive case was required to self-isolate. Since January 2021, the number of positive cases being reported has reduced.

5.9 **Attendance of children at childcare settings**

Settings have reported that attendance has generally been lower since September 2020. This is the case particularly amongst after school childcare settings. The increase in parents working from home has been the main reason cited for this decrease. The out of school childcare sector has been particularly affected by the current situation, with several of our after school clubs not able to reopen at all due to restrictions on access to their venues (most after school clubs use community venues such as school halls or community/church centres).

There has been a reduction in the number of applications received by the Childcare Offer for Wales team this academic year, compared to the previous year. In September 2019, we received 290 applications; in September 2020 we received 221. In January 2020, we received 287 applications; in January 2021, we have received 227 so far. We cannot state that this is as a direct result of the pandemic. It may be indicative of parental concerns about using childcare, or it may simply be a reduction in the birth rate for this cohort.

6. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

7. **CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications that are relevant to this report.

10. **LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 10.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2020–2024 highlights the Council's commitment to delivering three main priorities, namely:
- Ensuring People: *are independent, healthy and successful;*

- *Creating Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;*
- *Enabling Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.*

10.2 This report is linked to ensuring that the childcare sector in RCT is prosperous and fulfils its potential, and that we support children and their families to be independent, healthy and successful.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the childcare sector across Wales has been significant. The Council is incredibly proud of all childcare providers in RCT who have continued to deliver safe, quality care for children and their families throughout the last year in a professional and compassionate manner.

11.2 The pandemic has required the Council's childcare development team to find new ways of engaging and supporting the sector. These have been well received and have ensured that we are well placed to continue this support in the future, regardless of any ongoing or future pressures.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24TH FEBRUARY 2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES