



South West and Mid Wales Consortium Regional Partnership Forum South West Wales

Update Report: March 2010

Introduction

This update of Consortium Working provides an overview of progress during 2008-09; a summary of Consortium Working Strategic Plan 2009-2010; a summary of the evaluation of performance data at school and local authority level and evidence of the development of the maturity of consortium working. Each authority is committed to the development of consortium working in order to enable innovation and efficiencies through the empowerment of staff and authorities to collaborate and do things differently. The work embraces the principles of tri level reform where all concerned have the common goal of improving outcomes for young people. The focus of consortium working is school improvement and more specifically the improvement of learner standards and well being.

1. Summary of the Review of the 2008 – 2009 Consortium Working Strategic Plan

The Consortium Working Strategic Plan is reviewed and amended annually. The plan was an ambitious plan with a range of outcomes, from the outset it was recognised that some of the outcomes were medium term and would roll over to the following years plan. The review evaluates the achievements, the progress towards achieving the agreed outcomes and the lessons learned.

1.1 Achievements

- The review showed that 52% of the objectives for 2008-2009 were achieved thus efficiencies were realised through consortium working. Efficiency is achieved by a range of activities that add value to the work of each authority and may be cashable or non cashable. Potential for financial savings is significant given the extent of current overall spending by the six authorities, but in addition there is significant opportunity for non-cashable efficiencies (added value) , and for development of tri level working.
- The range of activities that add value and thus achieve efficiencies includes:-
 - improved service delivery - a more efficient and extended service for existing resources, this will be achieved immediately as it will be building upon an already improving service delivery
 - shared functions - functions of the service that can be shared across the Consortium
 - collaborative functions - sharing practice and developing a common entitlement
 - economy of scale-cross boundary working in areas of low incidence and low demand
 - increase of productive time, less staff travel time and less duplication of development
- Achievements include
 - Joint Professional Development Opportunities programme across the six authorities for school staff available on line
 - Regional brokerage for school improvement support agreed
 - Attracting funding for development from a range of sources including DCELLS and GTCW
 - Cash releasing and non cash releasing efficiencies in a range of areas including PM, HTLA, RAISE, Training for EIP, Chartered Teacher, ARR, Transition, Staff Development, Data
 - Effective delivery of PM for headteachers and HLTA assessment programme
 - Successful delivery of tender for two Chartered Teacher modules
 - Development of core materials for a middle leader programme for teachers
 - Development of the Inclusion Quality Mark Pilot
 - Development and implementation of a successful pilot approach to the SEF
 - Consortium Learning Coach Training programme delivered
 - Joint responses to a range of initiatives (SEF, RAISE, PM, HLTA) and policy documents (School Place Planning, BSF, Admissions, SEF, 14/19 Measure, RAISE)
 - Links with wider partnerships strengthened including RLPSWW (Regional Learning Partnership South West Wales), Consortia Cymru, Continyou Cymru etc.
 - Links with DCELLS and Estyn strengthened including Data, BSF, SEF, PM, RAISE, CFS, Inclusion, 14/19
 - Routine planning review and monitoring arrangements are effective including a full strategic review

1.2 Progress towards achieving remaining objectives

- Some areas of work have not been achieved due to external barriers including delays in National Policy / guidance delays have been beyond our control e.g. publication of NSEIPS, VLE, alignment of SEF
- Inability to attend and engage from one or two LAs on a persistent basis has had a detrimental effect on the ability of groups to make important decisions within time frames prescribed/agreed.
- Slow progress on developing Member and Headteacher input to monitoring/strategic planning
- CQI and Brokerage development limited by lack of development and delivery of self review, external evaluation process, and performance data
- Brokerage work and PDO data base not extended to defined areas of need and external consultants due to need for agreed QA processes, delay in establishing performance data, and effect on proposals of LAs restructuring arrangements

1.3 Lessons Learned

- Effective chair persons and facilitation move the work forward and outcomes are achieved
- Professional trust and understanding is building, people are far more willing to be open, share good practice and to problem solve for others in the group.

2 Summary of Consortium Working Strategic Plan 2009 – 2010

The 2009 - 2010 Strategic Plan has been developed following the Strategic Review of Consortium working and in response to National drivers and local priorities. The evaluation of performance and self review support the priorities in the plan and the plan addresses areas identified and areas for development across the consortium. There is an increased emphasis on all taking the responsibility to ensure that the outcomes impact positively on learner standards and well being and lead to adding value to the work of each local authority and achieving efficiencies through collaborative working. The plan is aspirational and seeks to build upon the effective practice and expertise that exists across the consortium within schools and local authority.

2.1 Priorities for Consortium Working

1. Monitoring, Challenge and Intervention

The development of a consistent monitoring, challenge and intervention process aimed at promoting continuous school improvement across the consortium whilst respecting and enhancing local arrangements

- 1.1 Provide an agreed common core of information, including data relating to school performance to assist in arriving at accurate judgements
- 1.2 Identify common guidance, principles and processes for LA staff and schools
- 1.3 Integrate identified best practice in self evaluation and lessons learnt from the SEF pilot programme
- 1.4 Ensure alignment with Estyn's Common Inspection Framework
- 1.5 Ensure the consistent application of agreed principles and processes (including LA variation)
- 1.6 Provide effective monitoring and high level challenge
- 1.7 Ensure early identification of schools causing concern
- 1.8 Ensure consistency in the provision of effective intervention and support
- 1.9 Facilitate the identification of effective practice at LA and school level through regular professional dialogue

2. System Leadership

To enable system change that is in synergy with tri-level reform and meets the demands of 21st Century education

- 2.1 Develop a shared understanding of system leadership between schools, local authorities and WAG
- 2.2 Develop and implement an approach to using system leaders at school and local authority level to support the development of effective education
- 2.3 Identify the core skills and competencies of system leaders at school and local authority level
- 2.4 Ensure that there are professional development opportunities for system leaders at school and local authority level
- 2.5 Promote system thinking and change in schools, local authorities and WAG in agreed specified areas
- 2.6 Develop collaborative working to contribute to the effective planning of school places and the best use of capital resources

3. Support for School Improvement

To broaden the range of support and wider support services available to schools and local authorities to enable the school and local authority workforce to better impact on the learning and wellbeing of children and young people.

- 3.1 Identify the range of support for learning that will be available to schools and LAs
- 3.2 Provide for identified professional development needs for school and LA staff emerging from the priorities for consortium working – Monitoring, Challenge and Intervention, Wider Support, System Leadership and Strategic Direction and Governance
- 3.3 Ensure peer support and the sharing of professional practice via networks and professional learning communities
- 3.4 Develop pedagogy skills referencing reflective practice and research
- 3.5 Promote the development of shared services to increase capacity

4. Strategic Direction and Governance

The further development of governance and management arrangements that ensure consortium working increases capacity within local authorities, adds value in terms of efficient and effective working, and contributes to improved outcomes for children and young people.

- 4.1 Provide a strategic direction for consortium working (within the national and local context), regularly reviewed and amended as necessary
- 4.2 Provide robust infra structure and systems to enable effective and efficient consortium working
- 4.3 Ensure that consortium working initiatives are subject to regular scrutiny
- 4.4 Ensure effective quality assurance at all levels
- 4.5 Enable consortium working arrangements to align with and embed the Core themes and Key elements of The School Effectiveness Framework
- 4.6 Achieve a unified voice on national policy arrangements and key consultations
- 4.7 Provide a forum for development of improved working relationships with WAG and other key partners
- 4.8 Establish, monitor and attain key performance targets in respect of improved capacity, more efficient use of resources, and improved pupil standards

2.2 National Drivers

The key National Drivers for consortium working are the same as those for the individual authorities. They include the Children Act, the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure, the Framework for Children's Learning for 3-7 year olds in Wales, the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF), Making the Connections and the Common Inspection Framework for Education and Training in Wales. A key priority is the embedding of the SEF, the 2009-10 Consortium Working Plan will support the process of embedding the SEF including the responsibilities of the National Model for School Improvement set out in the 'Developing A National System For Education In Wales By Embedding the School Effectiveness Framework' an agreement between WAG and WLGA.

3 A Summary of Evaluation of Performance Data, School Level and LA Level

As part of the Making Connections project in 2006-07 a range of research was undertaken focusing on pupil, school and local authority performance, potential improvement areas and partnership working. Performance in the period from 2006-07 to 2009 has now been reviewed and the opportunity taken to re-evaluate and add to earlier conclusions. The outcomes of the research underpin and inform the Consortium Working Strategic Plan for 2009-10. The research undertaken focused on:

1. Pupil and School performance: 1.1 Estyn School Inspections 2005-2009 and 1.2 School Performance Data Trends Key Stages 1-4
2. Local Authority performance: 2.1 Estyn LEA Inspections 2005-9 and 2.2 Audit Commission Perception Survey 2009

3.1 Summary of Findings

1. Pupil and School performance

1.1 Review of Estyn School Inspections 2005-2009

Primary Schools

- The percentage of swamwac schools receiving the highest grade (good with outstanding features) was lower than the percentage for all Wales in respect of every key question.
- There is a wide variation of grades across swamwac, but there are outstanding features hidden within the 'average' figure for each question. The fewest shortcomings are evidenced in KQ4
- The lowest graded questions are, Question 1: How well do learners achieve? and Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Secondary Schools

- swamwac secondary schools follow a similar pattern in respect of the all Wales figures, but attain higher grades in three of the seven areas, Question 1: How well do learners achieve?; Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? (This was the area with the fewest shortcomings) and Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?
- The swamwac secondary schools follow a similar pattern in respect of the all Wales figures, with no cause for concern in Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet learner needs and the needs of the wider community? (This is an improvement on the position observed in the Making Connections Project research) and Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?
- The questions with concerns are Question 2: Teaching, training and assessment (In the Making Connections Project research there were no concerns in this area.) and Question 6: Managing evaluation and improvement. (This is similar to the position in the results observed in the Making Connections Project)

1.2 School Performance Data Trends Key Stages 1-4

The reference point for the data comparison is the All Wales average result. This does not give a complete picture, since it does not take into account Free School Meals, or contextual data which enables a Value Added measure for key stages 2, 3 and 4. However it provides some useful indicators. For the Making Connections research an externally commissioned consultant from the Fischer Family Trust provided a

detailed value added performance data analysis for the swamwac local authorities across key stages two to four. It has not been possible to replicate this analysis for this report but work is ongoing

Summary of findings

CSI figures are increasing at KS2 and 3. KS1 figures remain static. KS4 figures not available at date of analysis and will be added later.

2. Local Authority Performance

2 Estyn Local Authority Inspections

The analysis of local authority Inspections considered all LA inspections across Wales from 2004-2009. It included the elements of Strategic Management, Support for School Improvement, Promoting Social Inclusion and Wellbeing, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Access and School Organisation, and Support Services. Not all elements have been inspected in every LA, but there has been a significant level of activity across all LAs, enabling a useful analysis to be undertaken.

Summary of Findings

- Generally, authorities in swamwac have the same or higher judgements than all Wales in the two areas inspected: current performance and prospects of improvement, with good performance from one or more of the swamwac authorities in each key area
- The exception to this is Access and School Organisation where judgements for current performance are generally lower than all Wales with significant variations across authorities, although prospects for improvement are generally good. This area also featured as a significant area for improvement for two local authorities in the previous analysis. This is a key area for attention by authorities, and there are clear opportunities for working together
- For all swamwac LAs the prospects for improvement are graded the same or higher than the judgement on performance.
- There is a high level of consistency of judgements across swamwac for Strategic Management and Support for School Improvement which have no important shortcomings in any of the LAs.

2.1 School Perception Survey 2009

This biennial survey is carried out by the Audit Commission and asks schools in England and Wales for their views on, the support received from their council and the services provided locally for their pupils. Results are expected to be used by councils for self-evaluation purposes and are used by the Audit Commission and the Wales Audit Office and Estyn and other inspectorates as a key component of LA inspection and Joint Reviews. For the Making Connections Report, not all the authorities had participated in this biennial survey, but in 2009, all swamwac authorities took part. The questions gather data from schools in sections similar to aspects inspected by Estyn.

- The responses from the survey show less common responses across authorities to the outcomes of the previous report from 2005, with every statement across the whole survey having both top and bottom quartile responses
- The survey measures the **perception** of the support provided by LAs and not standards in school improvement or ALN – findings may therefore be at odds with Estyn inspection findings
- Responses to the perception survey do not generally correlate to the Estyn inspection results, for example, in recent Estyn inspections of Support for School Improvement, all swamwac Authorities (bar 1) received 2 or better for performance and all 6 received a 2 or better for prospects for improvement. Yet there was significant dissatisfaction expressed against questions B3 – effectiveness in challenging schools; B9 and B10 – support for attainment at KS3 and 4; B17 – provision of financial information to support school improvement; and B18 – use of pupil performance data to support school improvement.

4. Evidence of the Development of the Maturity Consortium Working

- As part of the Making Connections project the work of the various groups from across the swamwac authorities in identifying and planning, at an operational level, the key areas of necessary and achievable consortium working to improve service delivery was analysed, and the outcomes laid the foundations of the first Consortium Working Strategic Plan. The methodology and governance procedures for working together were also identified, agreed and put in place.
- For the three years since 2006 swamwac has operated on that agreed basis, against an annual Consortium Working Strategic Plan, which is reviewed and updated annually. It was considered appropriate to undertake a more formal review of consortium working arrangements in 2009-10, updating the research originally carried out under the Making Connections project
- A formal self review process was put in place. This comprised of a formal self evaluation Questionnaire, containing a range of questions, and a structured discussion, all designed to obtain responses on the various areas of work and outcomes aspired to in the 2008-09 Consortium Working Strategic Plan, and on current methods of working

- Data obtained was subjected to both quantitative and qualitative analysis, drawing out areas of good practice, and areas for improvement. Information arising from the analyses informs and supports the priorities in the 2009-10 Consortium Working Strategic Plan
- Responses were received from 60% of the Operational Groups including the Strategic Group and Headteacher Group, with a total of 63 group members completing the questionnaire and participating in the discussions

Summary of findings

- Generally there were few surprises in the statistical analysis of responses provided few surprises. Group members generally are more aware of those activities which impact directly on their own areas of work.
- A number of responses did identify that there is room for improvement in respect of wider communication about the extent and success of consortium working initiatives. For example, whilst a majority supported the proposition that joint working provides opportunities and efficiencies in respect of joint development of training materials and jointly developed events, a significant minority indicated that there is room for the extension of this type of development work, and that wider communication and sharing of the developed work is needed. Also, a significant minority were unaware of the initiatives.
- Encouragingly, those questions which sought to identify the level of communication about consortium working within local authorities did indicate a good level of regular discussions about consortium working in team meetings.
- Although a majority understood the purpose of consortium working and could identify benefits, there was some lack of knowledge of the consortium governance structures and systems and of the impact of consortium working in terms of efficiencies. This is an area which is addressed in the 2009-10 Consortium Working Strategic Plan
- There is evidence of a good level of knowledge of the use of performance data to inform analysis of schools' strengths and weaknesses within the home authority, but a lower level of knowledge of comparison of school/pupil performance across authorities. Again this is addressed in the 2009-10 Consortium Working Strategic Plan.
- The majority were aware and supportive of the consortium approach for schools to access professional development opportunities, although a significant minority were unaware of whether staff were encouraged to attend the programmes. This may indicate a communication issue, but it was also noted that this may be attributable to funding issues.
- The qualitative data obtained from the analyses indicated that group members were generally happy with current administrative and meeting arrangements, although there were suggestions for improvements which will be actioned wherever possible.
- Most felt that there was value in consortium working and could indicate occasions when this had helped their work, but little detailed evidence was made available. The ability to address consistency in practice was valued.
- The group discussions raised a number of proposals for development areas for consortium working and these included system leadership, and broadening to include elements of the wider childrens' agenda

External evaluation

- In addition to the self review, an external evaluation has been commissioned and the report is currently awaited.

In Conclusion

We are making good progress in terms of the outcomes of consortium working and the development of the way in which we work. We have a clear picture of where we are and where we need to go that is based on evidence. We believe we are well placed through consortium working to add value to the work of each authority and to support each authority in making efficiencies. Consortium working is not an addition to the work of each authority in supporting school improvement but integral to achieving the core business and moral purpose of improving outcomes for all learners.

Supporting Papers Available

1	Review of 2008-2009 Consortium Working Strategic Plan	October 2009	swamwac
2	Summary of Consortium Working Achievements 2008-09	November 2009	swamwac
3	2009-2010 Consortium Working Strategic Plan	November 2010	swamwac
4	Consortium Working Performance Research 2009-10	February 2010	swamwac
5	Consortium Working Self Evaluation	February 2010	swamwac
6	Developing A National System For Education In Wales By Embedding the School Effectiveness Framework	February 2010	WAG