

## **National Model for Regional Working**

### **HR Directors Network - Model for “Specialist HR Advice and Support”**

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The **National Model for regional school improvement** refers to each Consortium ensuring that it has sufficient expertise at the centre to manage certain cross-consortium functions including:

**"Provision of specialist HR advice to support head teachers and governing bodies in dealing with performance management and capability"**

Elsewhere in the National Model document, some further detail is provided in terms of the HR functionality required, i.e. performance management, capability and sickness absence management.

In terms of context, the document refers to (a) ensuring that no duplication of effort takes place between the Consortium and local authorities, (b) the requirement for clarity of roles and (c) a shared understanding of the expectations of each key stakeholder.

Consideration has been given to the creation of Consortia central HR teams to provide “specialist HR advice to support head teachers and governing bodies in dealing with performance management and capability”.

Such an operating model is not considered to be “fit for purpose”.

However, it is considered that an alternative HR model is available which has much greater prospects of success. This model, as now set out, has the support of all local authority Heads of HR.

The requirement for teacher under-performance to be effectively addressed is readily acknowledged by the HRD Network.

This alternative HR operating model seeks to deliver this aim through a suitable balance of preventative and responsive actions, always recognising that head teachers and governing bodies are the primary players in this process and that they can only be successful if timely and effective support from school improvement professionals and HR specialists is available.

The National Model currently focusses primarily on teacher under-performance rather than on leadership under-performance. This HR operating model reflects this requirement.

It is proposed that each Consortium establishes a collaborative HR arrangement to provide specialist HR advice and support to head teachers and governing bodies so that they can address school improvement workforce issues in a way which builds upon each local authority’s existing HR strengths and will result in each local authority HR team delivering HR advice, employment policy design and case management support for school improvement purposes on a much more unified basis across each region.

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A corporate Head of HR will have overarching strategic responsibility for the co-ordination of regional HR activity to support the Consortium’s school improvement activity, but will not be accountable for the delivery of each local authority’s HR service delivery. Likewise, the designated Consortium lead Education HR Officer will have an operational co-ordinating role, but will not be accountable for HR service delivery.

This HR operating model is particularly suited to the needs of those Consortia which have a large geographical area and/or a significant requirement for the HR service to be provided bilingually.

It also meets, indeed exceeds, the requirements for specialist HR advice and support as set out in the National Model.

It is assumed that this model does not require the transfer of funding and that the funding of specialist HR advice and support to schools remains a matter between each local authority and its schools.

Finally, it is believed that the HR operating model now proposed is future-proofed to some extent as it will prove to be relatively adaptable in the event of any Consortia boundary changes taking place in due course.

The following characteristics are key elements of the preferred HR operating model for each Consortium:

1. Consortium regional HR activity will be led and co-ordinated by a corporate Head of HR as this will provide an additional strategic HR contribution as well as demonstrating that school improvement is a corporate responsibility
2. A lead Education HR Officer will be identified from within the existing HR teams within each Consortium, reporting in a matrix arrangement to both the Managing Director of the Consortium and to the lead Consortium Head of HR, with the aim of:
  - a. supporting Education HR Officers in each local authority and the lead Consortium Head of HR to engage effectively on a region-wide basis with the Managing Director, teaching associations/other trade unions and other key Consortium officers
  - b. establishing effective working relationships with the Consortium’s school improvement team/s and Governor Support team/s in relation to workforce matters
  - c. assisting to develop Consortium-related HR work programmes and monitoring reports and co-ordinating any necessary region-wide HR operational HR activity
  - d. assisting to develop region-wide HR CPD and other training activities
3. The designated lead Education HR Officers from each of the four Consortia will work collectively with Welsh Government officials and teaching associations on an all Wales basis in relation to key workforce issues, leading to a more structured approach to the development of workforce policies and strategies at Welsh Government, Consortium and local authority levels

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4. A lead Education HR officer in each local authority will be responsible for working with counterpart Education HR colleagues in each other local authority HR team to deliver this unified operating model of HR provision
5. All relevant individuals within each local authority HR team will be identified and, with effect from April 2014, these persons will constitute a unified HR resource which will support school improvement activity across the Consortium area. All such persons will, from time to time, meet the Managing Director of the Consortium to discuss workforce matters, along with the Consortium lead Education HR Officer and the Consortium lead Head of HR
6. This unified HR resource will provide schools with an opportunity to be supported by a larger and better equipped group of Education HR specialists as well as by corporate Heads of HR and other relevant HR specialists; this sharing of knowledge and expertise will provide opportunities to develop HR Officers in some specialist schools HR topics such as dealing with teacher under-performance
7. A skills analysis will be undertaken during 2014 to identify current HR capabilities and priority areas for development within the region-wide HR team; additional CPD opportunities will be made available, as necessary, leading to improved and more unified methods of working being introduced, particularly in relation to teacher-related performance management, capability and sickness absence HR advice and support
8. There will be an opportunity to share learning resources, for example the emerging Wales Academy for Local Government will make available a number of e-learning modules for use in relation to both HR officer and Governor training
9. The HR support provided will necessarily be reactive at times, but this model will enable an appropriate degree of emphasis to be placed on early HR interventions
10. An early priority will be to unify (a) key school employment policies, where feasible, and (b) HR operating practices across the region in a way which recognises that all good people management practice contributes to school improvement activity
11. Such unified school employment policies will be co-constructed with head teachers, governors, school improvement specialists and trade union representatives; they will all be tested - in particular - against the contribution which they make to improved school workforce performance
12. Existing local knowledge of individual schools and working relationships with head teachers and trade unions will be safeguarded
13. The responsibility for the management of employee and workforce data will remain with employing local authorities thereby ensuring no breach of data protection legislation
14. Consideration will be given to each local authority's website being used to provide easier access to each school's core employment policies for head teachers, teachers, support staff, governors, HR staff and trade unions
15. Peak workloads in terms of case work, along with any short term HR skills gaps, will be addressed primarily on a hub basis, but wider region-wide options will also be available through the adoption of this model
16. The outcome of the Consortium's school monitoring activities will be regularly shared and discussed with HR teams at local and regional levels so that individual teachers and schools which require an early intervention can be identified and prompt action taken

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17. Each school improvement intervention plan prepared by the Consortium will set out details of the staff-related actions which will be required as part of each school improvement intervention; these actions will be jointly worked up and agreed by school improvement professionals and HR staff
18. Regular monitoring reports on HR-related school improvement activity will be discussed with the Managing Director of the Consortium by the lead Consortium Head of HR and other lead HR Education Officers, as appropriate

It is acknowledged that this HR operating model of providing specialist HR advice and support on a unified basis constitutes a significant change in culture and will require the proactive participation and support of all key players involved in school improvement.

However, there is already evidence available to demonstrate that corporate Heads of HR and senior Education HR Officers have enthusiastically embraced the challenge of working collaboratively with the outcome being much better than if they had worked alone.

The characteristics of the preferred HR operating model as now outlined will be implemented on a phased basis during 2014/2015.

Existing local authority SLAs will need to be revised to reflect the proposed new HR operating model which will establish new region-wide working practices.

The position regarding schools which do not currently purchase HR advice and support from local authorities will need to be addressed separately by Consortia and the externally contracted HR service providers.

#### **Consortia Business Cases**

It is intended that the business case for each Consortia will include a provision along the lines of "The preferred HR operating model as set out in annex xx to the National Model will be adopted and implemented by this Consortium, with the aim of this model to be fully operational by April 2015"

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**10th March 2014**