



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2020

Report by: Alwyn Jones - GwE Assistant Director

Subject: GwE Work Programme and Priorities

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present an updated report to the Joint Committee members on GwE Work Programme for the Summer Term 2020 and to outline our priorities in going forward.

2.0 Background

2.1 The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system and schooling has been significantly disrupted. On 23rd March 2020, schools were re-purposed to support children of key workers and some vulnerable learners whilst also supporting all learners to stay safe and keep learning at home.

2.2 On June 3 the Welsh Government (WG) announced that there would be a phased opening of schools from 29th June, 2020 to give all pupils the opportunity to “check in, catch up and prepare.” Welsh Government published their Learning Guidance [<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-learning-over-summer-term>] to provide advice on learning and teaching taking place in schools and settings for the remainder of the summer term and to support practitioners as they prepare for the autumn term.

2.3 On July 9th, the Education Minister confirmed that all pupils will be able to return to school in September, and that schools will return to full capacity by September 14th, subject to continuing, steady decline in the presence of COVID-19 in the community. Welsh Government have published further learning guidance [<https://gov.wales/guidance-learning-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>] for the autumn term that gives schools and supporting partners a common set of priorities for learning, regardless of the level of operations in response to COVID-19.

2.4 GwE staff have adapted their work in order to continue to provide services and support for all our school communities. The most important thing for each school in North Wales at this time of unprecedented change and disruption has been the safety and well-being of their children and their workforce. Schools and settings have been striving to do all they can to support the physical and mental well-being of their children and young people throughout this period to ensure that they return to school with motivation and enthusiasm to learn.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 During the initial lockdown period, schools were supported to develop effective distance learning models, including engagement with learners and parents practices.

3.2 The six local authorities and GwE have taken a collegiate and collective regional approach to supporting schools during the pandemic lockdown. This was clearly demonstrated in the consistent regional approach in developing a supportive framework to ensure that all regional schools had the right policies in place together with a comprehensive risk assessment in order to create a safe environment to welcome the children back into schools.

3.3 During this period of lockdown as well, the Local Authorities and GwE working collaboratively, also continued to support schools with their distance learning and learner engagement, whilst also supporting schools to develop blended learning models in preparation for welcoming children back into school on June 29th and beyond.

3.4 The Local Authorities and GwE have also worked on issues that need to be addressed around the fitness for learning of learners in preparation for when they are fully integrated back into schools in September.

3.5 The six local authorities and GwE have worked tirelessly to address the educational needs of its learners during the pandemic lockdown. There is a clear collegiate commitment in the region to ensure that all individual learners are given the best possible opportunities to be supported and receive the most appropriate level of intervention to enable them to thrive and continue on their educational journey.

3.6 Documented activities and time spent, together with a summary of activities, outcomes and impact are outlined in Appendix 1.

3.7 Our main priorities in going forward will be:

- Keeping safe and keep others safe
- CfW and transformation agenda
- Peer support and supportive evaluation
- Improvement plans post categorisation to include those in statutory category
- Accelerated learning support

3.8 The work programme for GwE officers for the autumn term is outlined in Appendix 1. Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) will have a crucial role over the coming months in supporting schools as all learners are fully integrated back into schools from September 14th.

3.9 All aspects noted must be in accordance with the 'Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2020' issued by Welsh Government. The current version came into force on August 17th, 2020.

3.10 The work programme and our priorities will be reviewed continually to respond to the Covid-19 situation and government guidance and regulations and agreed with the GwE Management Board and Joint Committee. The work programme and its mode of delivery will also be discussed and agreed with Head teachers and schools.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to approve the content of the report, the GwE work programme and draft priorities which will be reviewed continually to respond to the Covid-19 situation and government guidance and regulations.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

8.1 Consultation with the GwE Management Board and Joint Committee.

9.0 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 - Updated report on GwE work programme Summer Term 2020

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

I appreciate that the work programme has been reviewed to respond to the Covid-19 situation, and that this has been planned thoroughly, inclusively, and to be delivered within GwE's existing resources.