

Chapter 7: 14-19 Commissioning Consortia

The present system

- 7.1** As we identified in Chapter 6, we believe that 14-19 learning pathways is an excellent policy. It is the **implementation** of this policy which now challenges the Department. The present system is beset with a series of deficiencies and challenges which include:
- limited provision of vocational, practical and experiential learning
 - a competitive approach to attracting and retaining learners
 - fundamental cultural, structural and financial differences between Further Education Institutions and schools which have grown as FEIs have become more entrepreneurial and independent
 - some very small sixth forms, operating at a level at which it is impossible to be economically efficient or to provide the full range of entitlement to learners
 - inadequate and unequal resources (the level of capital funding in both schools and FEIs impacts upon the learning environment, buildings and equipment and schools have lower levels of capital funding than FEIs)
 - inequitable and differential approaches to learner transport issues, to, from and between institutions
 - the marginalisation of work-based learning and, in particular, private training providers, and
 - gender stereotyping, especially for vocational education, given limited resources.

Entitlement and efficiency 14-19

- 7.2** Aspects of current funding and provision would be inappropriate within a static demography; in the context of steadily declining numbers of young people, they are wholly unacceptable. Given the many demands on the education and training budget outlined in this Review so far, we need to use the substantial yet limited resource for education as efficiently as possible.
- 7.3** Research indicates that efficiency gains in an FEI are most evident when turnover reaches circa £15m a year: only 55% of our FEIs are operating at this level. Estyn has noted the Audit Commission's recommendation that the minimum effective size of a school sixth form is 150 learners across two year groups. Only 47% of our sixth forms are operating at this level; there are many small sixth forms and they could well become even smaller with demographic decline.

The inevitable conclusion is that given scarce resources and within the context of restrictions in funding over the next few years, too many institutions and organisations function at a local level for a small country such as Wales with a population of 2.9m

fforwm – response to consultation

Estyn suggested collaborative working could mitigate the problems of small institutions and learner groups. Area network plans have been developed to strengthen collaboration, but they are in their infancy and few if any presently enable learners to make informed choices across a full range of academic and vocational options.



- 7.4 A substantial increase in the breadth, delivery and quality of vocational routes cannot be delivered by any single institution and particularly not by small sixth forms working in isolation. There needs to be a significant expansion in the quantity and availability of experiential, practical and work-based learning, involving FEIs, training providers and employers. The 14-19 policy gives strong emphasis to non-formal and informal learning and the importance of engaging with non-statutory organisations, the youth service, youth organisations and the third sector. Networks must therefore be wide and inclusive – beyond the statutory sector and FEIs. Only a move towards a truly collaborative joined-up system will enable us to deliver this expanded entitlement, to be more efficient and to cope with falling rolls.

The voluntary sector has a good record on collaborative working but believes that it is often treated as a junior partner and that funding arrangements reinforce this

WCVA – response to consultation

- 7.5 We recognise that there is no one solution for the many and varied circumstances across Wales. Some commentators argue that tertiary systems benefit learners, promote choice and strengthen rather than weaken the performance of 11-16 schools. However, the tertiary solution is only one possibility and will not commend itself everywhere.

Taken together with the emerging evidence on the benefits of scale, it suggests that a managed tertiary system offers the best prospect of both quality and equity in 14-19 provision

Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training – Sept 2006

Collaboration in Wales

- 7.6 Estyn, in 2006³¹ defined four degrees of working together, ranging from Competition, through Co-operation, Co-ordination and Collaboration to Confederation. Their conclusions are illustrated below:

Percentage of Schools in Wales and the extent to which they effectively collaborate

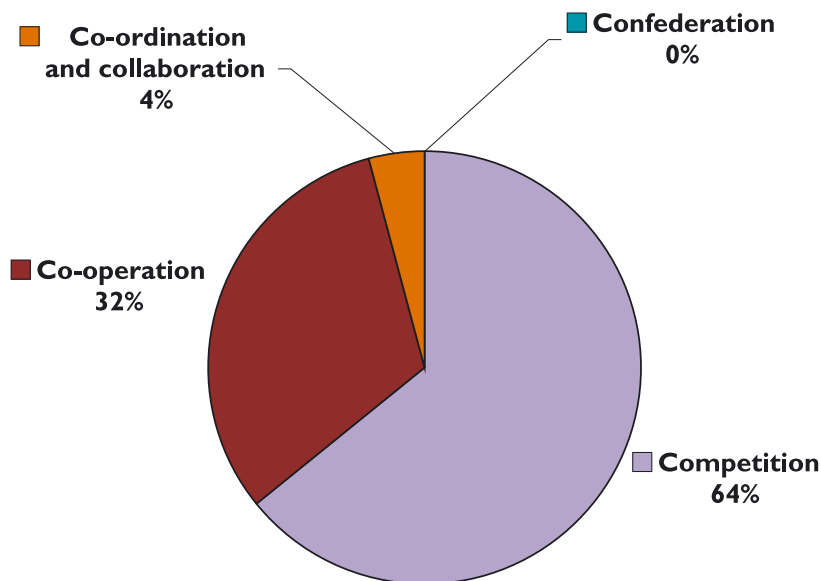


Figure 7

³¹ Collaboration between schools with sixth forms and Further Education Colleges to deliver flexible high quality provision that expands choice and achieves value for money – Estyn – Crown Copyright – 2006

- 7.7** There are several examples of schools and FEIs across Wales establishing formal or informal networks for 16-19 provision across a locality. Schools and sometimes FEIs have worked together to develop and publicise a single programme of courses available with a common timetable and a single prospectus. Typically, learners choose from a combined prospectus of courses and travel between institutions to take those courses not available in their home institution. Two secondary schools in Haverfordwest, for example, have worked with the local FEI to produce a common A level timetable, and have consolidated some aspects of provision. In Caerphilly, on a larger scale, the 14-19 consortium has successfully managed to offer 40 A level options to all learners where previously some could only choose from 11. They use a model of base schools and host schools and a blocked timetable which utilises twilight sessions. This is a commendable achievement.
- 7.8** However, such partnerships are often in the early stages of development and most have focused on A levels; some exclude vocational provision from the offer, others list only a limited range of vocational courses. They are, in some cases, constrained by conflicts of interest. Whilst we welcome the expansion of choice that these networks offer, we feel that they do not go far enough and effective partnerships are still few in number.

The Merthyr Tydfil 14-19 Network has made a good start in widening the choice of courses available to learners. However, along with most learning networks in Wales, the work in establishing a collaborative option menu is at an early stage and there is still some way to go before it is fully operational. At present there are some shortcomings in important areas, which include:

- *the limited amount of collaboration overall, including different timetable structures in schools*
- *the constraints on learners' choice which depends mainly on whichever provider they attend*
- *too few opportunities to mix general and vocational options, and*
- *the unnecessary duplication of courses and the small size of too many sixth form classes.*

Estyn – Area Inspection Report – Merthyr Tydfil

- 7.9** The most successful and well-established model of an operational partnership we encountered, and which had influenced the Caerphilly model, was in England. It demonstrates outstanding outcomes:

Over a five year period (2002 to 2007) the outcomes of the partnership across the City have included:

- a rise in achievement of 5 A*-C GCSEs from 43% to 60%
- an additional 8% of learners achieving level 2 qualifications at 17
- an increase in post-16 participation in education, training or work with training from 82% to 93%
- an increase of over 22% in the number of learners achieving level 3 at 18, and
- 20% of learners at KS4 benefiting from one day per week of work-based learning.

Wolverhampton 14-19 Partnership

From partnerships to consortia

Formalised networks or clusters appear to have some major advantages. They allow for the expansion of programme range and associated economies of scale, associated expansion in progression routes, and stronger and better coordinated links with industry. They also provide a nice counter balance to the competitive pressure between providers that stems from the positional competition within the academic routes. In particular, networks that span the transition years of upper secondary education, tertiary education and training, and employment entry would seem to have significant potential to strengthen provision and to alleviate the inherent competitive pressures between providers.

Professor Jack Keating, May 2007



- 7.10 There is evidence³² that strongly collaborative systems can deliver substantially improved results but we agree with Beecham’s conclusion that **a voluntaristic approach to collaboration will not suffice**: the barriers are too many and the delivery mechanisms too uncertain. What is needed is a more formal approach to partnerships, with shared sovereignty and the pooling of resources and decision making so as to achieve outcomes that are in the best interests of the public (primarily learners and employers). Shared sovereignty takes us beyond the present notion of partnerships/networks to the more robust concept of **managed consortia** which would fit better with the Estyn category of ‘confederation’.

The current voluntaristic approach to partnership and collaboration is plagued by institutional self-interest. [It] cannot continue and should not be an option for the future.

Coleg Glan Hafren – response to consultation

7.11 To move forward quickly (and we note the difficulties that the Pathfinder projects have experienced in terms of timescale), we must have a clear, detailed and tested model. We offer such a model which we have drawn from having visited and talked with a number of consortia which demonstrate current best practice and which are delivering tangible outcomes. Our recommendation, summarised below, is that the Department should establish a cross-Wales network of systemically structured and managed consortia to:

- plan and deliver to learners a much expanded entitlement through increasing the range of options across all aspects of provision
- offer independent and disinterested advice that is not influenced by an institution’s need to maximise student numbers and income – the needs of individual learners must come above those of the institution
- provide a wider range of pedagogical and experiential approaches which are likely to engage more learners, improve participation and deliver better outcomes for individuals, institutions and Wales as a whole
- develop and offer a broader range of high quality work-related learning options which include strong links to employers
- adopt a personalised approach to learner entitlement where aspirations and potential are identified and where a commitment is made to achieving these, perhaps in the form of a promise to attain, for example, an apprenticeship or a place in a nearby HEI
- develop sophisticated personalised learning plans for all learners, captured and managed electronically
- create efficiency savings in the provision of learning experiences through increased specialisation and the consolidation of smaller class sizes across providers, and
- embed a significantly improved culture of collaboration, strategic thinking and delivery across all areas of Wales.

Critical success factors

7.12 We believe there are a number of critical success factors in the establishment of effective consortia. These include:

- the development of area plans which focus on the delivery of full learner entitlement as an essential outcome
- a funding methodology which both facilitates and requires cross-institutional working³³

32 Nuffield Review Annual Reports 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06, and I. Schagen, J. Lopes, S. Rutt, C. Savory and B. Styles ‘Do post-16 structures matter? Evaluating the impact of local patterns of provision’, LSN, 2006

33 We have seen a simple yet effective method of cross-charging between institutions where funding follows the learner from the age of 14, with the home institution retaining a fixed percentage (in one case 10%) which it would retain as a contribution to overheads even if all provision was out-sourced.

- a dedicated, full time leader at a senior professional level for each consortium
- timetable alignment which retains flexibility at an institutional level
- attention to the detail of logistics so that the mechanics and responsibilities of collaboration are clearly defined in consortia documentation, including such issues as finance, insurance and transport, and
- the development, at a national level, of cross-institution ICT-based support tools to facilitate communication and the management of learners' pathways and progression³⁴.

7.13 We would strongly advocate an approach which minimises the duplication of effort and resources across consortia. Differences between consortia will reflect the specific needs of areas, but there is much that could usefully be developed at an all-Wales level. Examples include funding processes, health and safety guidance, learner-information management systems and processes for contracting with non-educational providers.

7.14 Successful implementation of such a model would invigorate the 14-19 education and training system and would involve:

- the fusion of top-down targeting, policy directives and commissioning with bottom-up planning and delivery, led and owned by education and training professionals
- a consistent and coherent approach to consortia management across Wales, drawing upon tried and tested, yet customised resources which have been developed and road-tested elsewhere
- the identification and acknowledgement of win-win growth drivers for all institutions involved, and
- a scaled programme of development over time.

Establishing excellent consortia

7.15 We envisage a phased process whereby three to four pilot areas are identified initially. Central to the success of these areas will be the recruitment of consortium leaders. These leaders need to be of sufficiently high calibre and experience to carry weight with Head Teachers and Principals. We suggest that they are either serving or recently serving heads of post-14 institutions. It is essential that their leaders and their management teams have a single reporting line at DCELLS Group Director level and that they are supported by senior officials and mentored by professional(s) from outside Wales who have direct experience of setting up similar successful consortia. It may be appropriate to commission a specific consortium leadership development programme for the initial team, to be cascaded to subsequent consortium leaders across Wales. In this way, each individual consortium would move forward strategically and consistently rather than in isolation and would be able to benefit from experience of others.

7.16 A consortium may be defined by the local employment sub-economy and is likely to span the footprint of several local authorities. The defining characteristic must be the number and size of institutions within the consortium needed to deliver an expanded entitlement efficiently. The number of consortia should be less than 22 (the number of local authorities), but probably more than four (the number of regions DCELLS envisages within Wales). Successful consortia in England tend to operate with approximately 5,000 learners in school sixth forms, with additional numbers in FEIs. In Wales, the largest local authority area has just over 3,700 learners in sixth forms – the smallest fewer than 600. A judgement has to be taken by the Welsh Assembly Government in discussion with the Welsh Local Government Association on the optimal number of consortia needed to deliver entitlement and efficiency, but our judgement is that it will be between eight and ten. We set out a possible configuration in Figure 8 on the following page.

³⁴ We reviewed such a model developed by an external company, which both enables detailed tracking of each learner's progress, across institutions, and allows staff to provide feedback on assignments and verify achievements and experiences recorded by the learner. The system can also be used to promote visits and other wider experiences and for learners to give feedback on learning



Figure 8 Possible designation of consortia

National	Regional Strategic Group	14-19 Consortia	Local Authorities	Current FEI	
DCELLS Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills	R1: North Wales	C1: North West Wales	Gwynedd	Harlech Menai Meirion Dwyfor	
			Ynys Môn		
	Employer Advisory Panel	C2: North Central Wales	Conwy	Llandrillo Llysfasi	
			Denbighshire		
	Provider Advisory Panel	C3: North East Wales	Flintshire	Deeside WCOH Yale	
			Wrexham		
	WESB Wales Employment and Skills Board	R2: Mid Wales	C4: Mid Wales	Ceredigion	Ceredigion Powys
				Powys	
	Employer Advisory Panel	R3: South West Wales	C5: South West Wales	Carmarthenshire	Sir Gâr Pembrokeshire
				Pembrokeshire	
Provider Advisory Panel	C6: Swansea Bay	Neath Port Talbot	Neath Port Talbot Gorseinon Swansea		
		Swansea			
Employer Advisory Panel	R4: South East Wales	C7: Valleys	Blaenau Gwent	Bridgend Merthyr Morgannwg Ystrad Mynach	
			Bridgend		
Provider Advisory Panel	C8: Gwent East	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire		
		Merthyr Tydfil			
Provider Advisory Panel	C9: Cardiff Metropolitan	Rhondda Cynon Taff	Newport		
		Cardiff			
			Torfaen	Gwent	
			Vale of Glamorgan	Barry Glan Hafren St David's	

7.17 It is essential to establish win-win situations for all institutions within the consortia so that even the best-performing, largest institutions actively participate in order to improve their own performance. Similarly, the smaller sixth forms should be able to improve their participation rates and to experience greater stability even in the context of demographic downturn, through

attracting learners to the provision that they deliver best. We believe consortia are the only means by which the survival of small sixth forms can be justified: either through developing niche specialisms from which larger providers are able to purchase learning provision for their own learners, or by developing a focused pastoral specialism as a home institution for learners. Our view is that full and active participation in such consortia should be a pre-condition of funding, most importantly for very small sixth forms. In all cases, institutions would retain responsibility for their own learners' performance, progression and pastoral support, while commissioning learning provision from any provider within or even outside the consortium.

7.18 There may not need to be exactly the same structural approach within each region; but regions and the consortia within them should offer:

- entitlement to excellent provision, with a significantly increased number of choices for all learners from 14-19 (at least the minimum specified within the emerging 14-19 legislation), with a particular emphasis on increased vocational and experiential learning opportunities
- the opportunity to achieve demonstrable improvements in key and Basic Skills
- the opportunity for learners to choose to learn through the medium of Welsh or English, and
- opportunities for progression – both lateral and to employment and/or Higher Education, (recognising that, at this level, progression may be to provision outside the area).

Responsibilities at each level

7.19 In proposing a network of consortia we have considered the responsibilities of each level of the network and make the following proposals.

HOME INSTITUTION LEVEL

7.20 The head of the institution (sixth form, FEI or training provider) at which the learner is registered should be responsible for:

- **registering** learners
- ensuring that **learners' entitlements** are met
- receiving funding for learners from the Local Authority and/or WAG as at present and **managing the budget** according to the needs of those learners
- providing **advice and guidance** to learners before, during and after enrolment
- supporting learners in the development of their **individual learning plan**, including, as appropriate, choices from other providers within the consortia
- **purchasing learning opportunities** for learners according to their individual learning plans
- ensuring that registered learners experience high quality learning provision, regardless of the location of provision, and
- managing the **quality of the overall learning programme** for each learner.

7.21 In purchasing a range of learning opportunities for learners from a number of external institutions, the head of an institution would retain accountability for the learners' achievements: qualification results would be credited to the home institution, no matter where the learners undertook the learning. In this way each institution would be encouraged to focus on achieving the best possible results for learners, no matter where they were learning.



- 7.22 Providing choice for learners from across a wide geographical area should not imply substantial travel by learners. No learner should need to travel far for popular or generic provision such as Care, Mathematics, English or Welsh. However, all learners within an area should have the option to select more specialised provision from outside their own institution or local authority boundary. Furthermore, the most specialised provision may be accessible only beyond the footprint of the consortium, possibly ICT-enabled, and staff may travel between delivery locations. Cumbria is illustrative of how consortia may in effect operate as several local networks, each offering the popular choices within a travel to learn area, but jointly spanning an area larger than a local authority so as to maximise both choice and efficiency in the use of scarce teaching skills.

PROVIDER INSTITUTION LEVEL

7.23 The head of the institution or company providing learning opportunities should be responsible for:

- contributing to the Area **prospectus** and to the development of the area **timetable**
- course specific **induction** for learners
- developing and delivering **learning programmes**
- **charging** home institutions for learning provision
- managing the **quality** of learning programmes
- managing the **assessment and award processes** in conjunction with awarding bodies, and
- recruiting and developing appropriately **skilled and qualified staff** to deliver learning programmes.

CONSORTIUM LEVEL

7.24 Each consortium leader should be responsible for:

- **engaging with providers** to develop relationships, agree secondments as necessary and build the consortium
- developing the **area development plan** for 14-19 provision in conjunction with consortium members
- developing an **aligned timetable**
- developing and managing **underpinning financial and technical agreements** for members of the consortium, in conjunction with other consortia leaders
- developing an **area prospectus**, and managing the development of an 'alternative' learner prospectus
- overseeing the implementation of an **ICT infrastructure**, using Wales-wide software, to manage learner progression and communications across the consortium
- **identifying consortia-wide opportunities for learning and progression opportunities in conjunction with employers**
- in conjunction with local authority economic development officers, **identifying employment and delivery needs** of the consortium area which are unique to that area and working with providers to **develop learning provision** which meets the needs of the area
- **manage the validation of vocational provision** within schools
- manage the development and provision of **learning coaches and careers advice**
- the development of **learner and employer engagement and feedback systems**

- developing and implementing a **learner travel plan** within the locality in conjunction with the local authority, and
- sourcing effective **professional development programmes** for teachers, lecturers and leaders.

REGIONAL LEVEL

7.25 At a Regional Level, in respect of 14-19 provision, the Regional Strategic Implementation Group would be responsible for:

- enacting **Children and Young People’s Partnerships’** responsibilities for the planning of 14-19 education
- undertaking **strategic decision making** – setting attainable targets for consortia and providers, mediating key decisions about demand and developing and implementing multi-agency strategies in fields such as community learning
- ensuring providers and consortia of providers respond to **regional skills needs**
- ensuring that commissioned **funding** in the region is being **deployed effectively** to deliver national and regional strategic and skill priorities
- taking responsibility and accountability for driving forward the delivery of consortia and provider **performance targets**, evaluating consortia and provider performance and initiating **intervention and remedial action** when necessary, and
- identifying where **provider reconfiguration, merger or closure** should take place and preparing the subsequent detailed case for change advice to the Minister, and
- developing a region-wide prospectus within three years.

7.26 We were interested to learn of the experience of the Director of 14-19 provision in Cumbria, which has five 14-19 consortia, with overall leadership provided by a core team of managers reporting to the Director. The managers take lead responsibility either for a consortium area or for specific key issues such as e-learning, personalised learning, employer engagement and transport. We believe that it is essential that consortia are supported by a management structure for such key functions, whether at a consortium or regional level.

7.27 Figure 9 below illustrates the linkages between different components of the consortia system – this would be replicated across four regions, with two or three consortia in each.



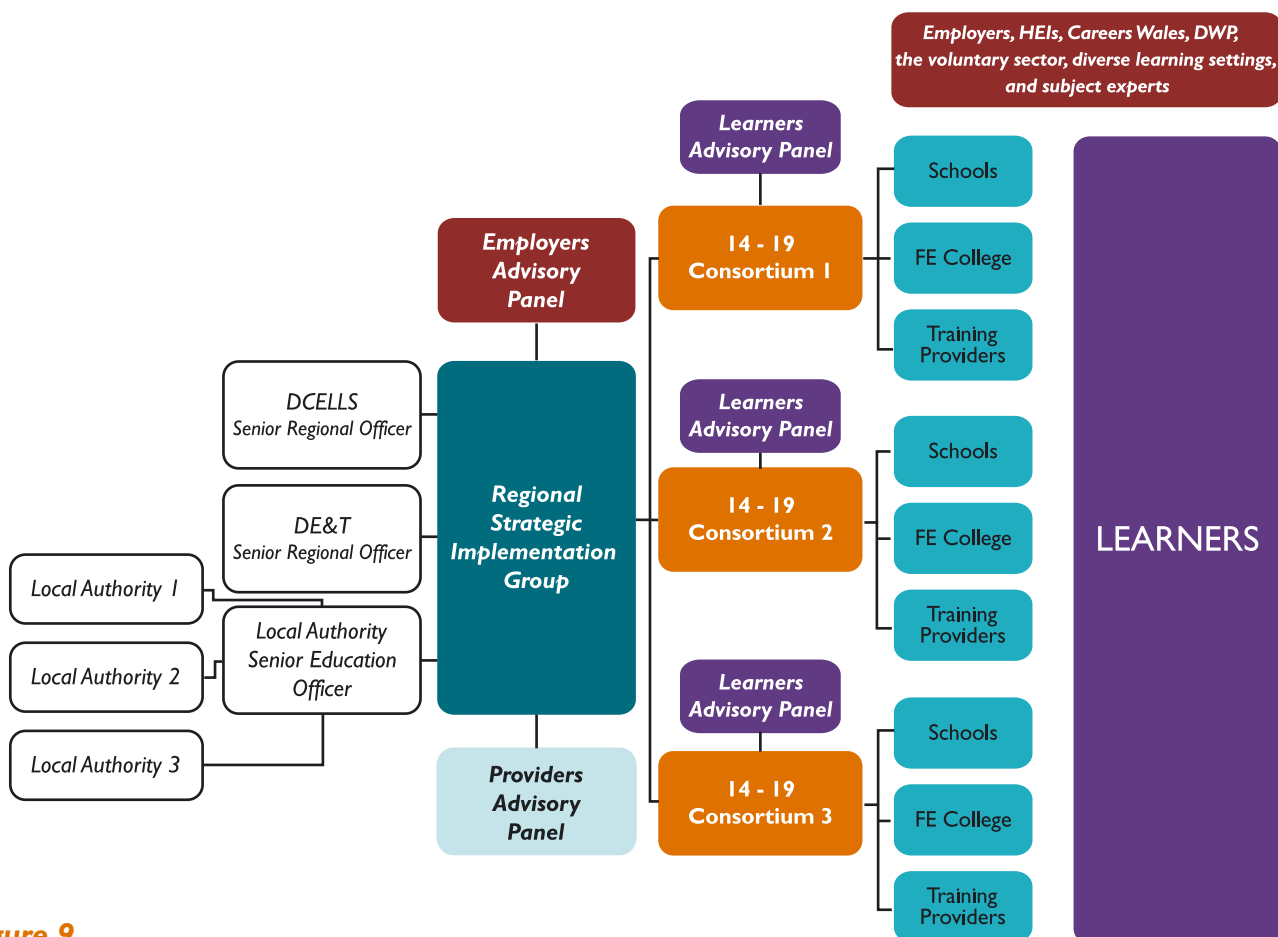


Figure 9

NATIONAL LEVEL

7.28 Managed by DCELLS for the Welsh Assembly Government, the national responsibilities for managing 14-19 provision should include:

- the recruitment, development, management and support of **Consortium Leaders**
- the commissioning, specification and dissemination to consortia of a Wales-wide **learner management information system**, to incorporate individual learning plans, drawing on existing systems currently in use in England or elsewhere
- the **implementation of policy, including the setting and monitoring of targets** for consortia, to include:
 - learners' basic and key skills achievements across each Area, including the attainment of national targets for adult literacy and numeracy
 - a reduction by 2010 of the numbers of NEETs to 3% of the youth population, with corresponding reductions in economic inactivity
 - the promotion and take-up of learning in key national priority areas, including STEM, the Welsh Language and learning through the medium of Welsh
 - levels of learner awareness, engagement and satisfaction
 - levels of employer awareness, engagement and satisfaction
 - levels of community awareness, engagement and satisfaction
 - the quality of provision, with Management assessed at Grade 2 or above within all institutions by 2008, and for all aspects of provision by 2010

- an **Annual Review of Progress** for each consortium against key targets, and the development of Development Plans where necessary
- the **integration of the post-14 funding system**
- the **funding of consortia**
- the **determining of changes** needed to fulfil Sector Skills Agreements and the national skills strategy
- the development of criteria for the **validation of vocational provision** within schools
- the development and implementation of a **national employer engagement strategy**, and
- the development of rigorous appraisal tools such as 360 degree stakeholder appraisal.

Cascaded Commissioning

7.29 Our approach builds on and moves beyond Beecham by introducing a model of ‘cascaded commissioning’. Under the Children’s Act 2004 Local Authorities were designated as commissioners of all services for children, including education. This does not mean that they should be the providers of education – they currently commission schools to provide education and learning opportunities. Within our model, the commissioning is further cascaded through the consortium by the home institution which is responsible for ensuring, but not necessarily delivering, each learner’s entitlement. The home institutions may commission learning from any appropriate source – including from other consortia – but they remain wholly responsible for the learning and for the outcomes of that learning. Cascaded commissioning will significantly broaden the opportunities for learners while retaining unambiguous accountability – with home institutions.

Commissioning is: “the process of specifying, securing and monitoring services to meet people’s needs at a strategic level. This applies to all services, whether they are provided by the local authority, NHS, other public agencies or by the private or voluntary sectors.”

Audit Commission, 2003

7.30 From 2010, Local Authorities will have a responsibility to deliver a Children and Young Person’s Plan which will take into account and incorporate 14-19 planning. There are several ways in which this planning could be taken forward but our approach begins with Beecham’s conclusion that local authorities need to work together or face major re-organisation within 5 years. Our recommendations build on the work of 14-19 partnerships by creating consortia which are more tightly structured than any existing partnership. However, we believe that the educational element of Children and Young People’s Plans should be developed above the level of a single local authority. We see consortia spanning local authorities and having responsibility for developing and managing the delivery of 14-19 area plans. At the regional level, a senior Local Authority representative (with responsibilities delegated upwards from all constituent authorities) should work with senior officers from DCELLS and DE&T to create the strategic framework in which the consortia operate.

7.31 Initially, the consortia will need to be driven from the bottom up, building on the existing voluntary model of collaboration and providing a more cohesive infrastructure with clear objectives, ambition and targets. Over three to five years, however, the consortium should move towards the central commissioning and purchasing of learning, to ensure the best possible fit between learning needs and provision. Statutory opportunities now exist to support this through the Further Education and Training Act 2007. Consortia leaders will have to make clear priority decisions: on efficiency and quality, with regard to who delivers what within the consortium and how pooled



○ funding should be allocated by the consortium. The relationship between national and regional responsibilities in relation to target setting at national level, monitoring at regional level and the establishment of an infrastructure to support consortia could be developed through the DCELLS Organisational Development project.

○ **7.32** The better use of existing resources, such as staff and facilities, to improve outputs and outcomes for individuals and the economy is the most effective route to efficiency gains. In our view this can only be achieved through effective consortia rather than through institutions acting independently. While a good quality, more efficient system will release resources, it will need pump-priming. There is a need for a significant investment to ensure that areas are able to operate effectively across institutions. We therefore suggest a staggered approach to resourcing improvements, including capital, within a phased development of consortia.

○ **7.33** This development of consortia will also create a need for a new definition of area in terms of the inspection of quality by Estyn. We consider the need to re-define area inspections and to specifically assess progress in terms of collaboration in section 9.

Opportunities for specialisation

7.34 We touched above on the possibility of developing specialisms in provision, particularly in smaller sixth forms. In considering the opportunities for specialisation which are created by a consortium approach, it seems appropriate to reflect upon the development of Skills Academies in England. At the heart of this initiative is the pursuit of excellence in the delivery of skills needed by employers and by the economy.

National Skills Academies will be employer driven world class centres of excellence delivering the skills required by each major sector of the economy.

Department for Children, Schools and Families

7.35 There are two senses in which such excellence is essential: in the delivery of a wide range of skills required locally or regionally and the delivery of specialist skills required by key sectors of the economy. Our proposals for a network of consortia are precisely geared to deliver excellence of the first kind, but there is also a need for consortia to engage on a pan-Wales basis to create national networks to meet a number of sectoral needs. There is already a Welsh language network in schools, CYDAG, which plans and delivers training for teachers through the medium of Welsh, and a faith based network centring on St David's college in Cardiff.

7.36 The very essence of the skills academies which have been developed to date in England is that they represent employer choice. Employers are making decisions about where the capacity for excellence in specialist areas lies or could be developed. This must be the approach in developing a Welsh response to skills academies as recommended in *One Wales*. However, there is a need for engaged leadership by WAG. Such specialism is not only about skills in high technology sectors. Employers in the hotel and catering industry impressed upon us the need for significant development of hospitality and catering training in Wales.

There is a lack of hospitality skills to meet the needs of the tourism industry in Wales. We would see significant benefit in having a centre of excellence in Wales.

Manager – Hilton Hotel, Cardiff

7.37 Once it is clear what areas of specialist skill are most necessary within the Welsh economy, specialisation can be promoted in single institutions within local networks, across several institutions within one or more networks, or by all-Wales linkages. In many cases specialisms of this kind will need to include a Higher Education as well as a Further Education presence.

We need strategic planning in a regional sense – to turn it around and put real decision making in place in Wales. In this school we are planning developments up to 2015, but we have been doing so in a vacuum of decision-making, advice and strategic planning. Currently there is no strategic impetus: we need to question and to share – to look at targets together and agree a way forward.

Paul Mulraney – Head Teacher – The Alun School, Mold

Recommendations for Commissioning Consortia:

We recommend that the Department should:

- R65 invite providers and local authorities to submit joint proposals to develop consortia within areas defined by the Welsh Assembly Government**
- R66 immediately pilot three or four consortia to test elements of infrastructure including commissioning and funding**
- R67 within 3 years, ensure that the rest of Wales adopts the consortium model**
- R68 within 5 years, direct all 14-19 funding through consortia**
- R69 ensure the appointment in each consortium of a Leader to act as a catalyst for change**
- R70 create an action-learning set for consortia leaders, linked to best practice in England and internationally**
- R71 locate responsibility for managing careers guidance and learner coaching at the consortium level within the consortium leader's team**
- R72 pump-prime capital expenditure in the pilots as a first step towards a larger capital programme for schools and FEIs**
- R73 consider the case for building on institutional and consortia strengths to create academies in areas of national or sectoral need**
- R74 commission and implement an ICT-based national learner management and profiling system as an essential element of consortium architecture, and**
- R75 ensure that each consortium adopts a common system of timetabling, cross-institution protocols and a learner promise system.**

