

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **26th February 2020**

Report Subject: **EAS Business Plan and Local Authority Annex 2020-2021 (Draft for consultation)**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr J. Collins, Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynette Jones, Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
√	11.02.20	14.02.20			26.02.20	11.03.20		

1. Purpose of the Report

This report asks for members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2020-2021 and the Local Authority Annex 2020-2021, as part of the regional consultation process. Through this activity Members will ensure that the plan enables appropriate support for schools to improve and that all pupils reach their potential across Blaenau Gwent.

2 Scope and Background

- 2.1 The EAS is a not for profit limited company that is owned by the five LAs in South East Wales. The EAS delivers, through an agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.
- 2.2 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan with accompanying annexes for each of the five Local Authorities (LAs). This Business Plan (2020–2021) outlines the programme of work that is required to continue to improve outcomes and provision for children and young people in settings and schools in South East Wales. The plan focuses on the need to raise aspiration and accelerate improvement in pupil outcomes, improve the quality of teaching and leadership, support schools to realise the national reform agenda and to continue to build upon the self-improving system within and across schools and settings.
- 2.3 Priorities for the Business Plan have been derived from Local Authority Strategic Plans, the progress that has been made towards the previous Business Plan, areas that have been identified as requiring improvements through internal self-evaluation processes and external research.

2.4 Members are asked to take the opportunity to comment on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process and provide a written response as appropriate.

2.5 Members are asked to consider the main strengths and areas for development within Blaenau Gwent, as detailed in LA Annex and to consider how LA services can be aligned to meet the ambitious targets within the Business Plan, therefore ensuring all pupils meet their full potential.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 This report has been approved by Education DMT, CLT for submission to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

Option 1:

For members to accept the report and the Business Plan.

Option 2:

For members to consider the plan and offer further comment for consideration by the EAS; this can be done via a written response back to the EAS.

Written feedback on the draft Business Plan should be provided to the Managing Director of the EAS following the scrutiny meeting. This feedback will inform the final version of the Business Plan.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 **Statutory Responsibility**

4.1.1 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan with accompanying annexes for each of the five Local Authorities (LAs).

4.1.2 **Corporate Plan Education Aims**

- Improve pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing, particularly for our more able and our most vulnerable learners.
- Improve the quality of our education services and our school buildings to help our learners achieve great outcomes.
- Continue to support our school leaders to help our pupils achieve their ambitions.

We will expect:

- Our Vision for Education to continue to support the work of schools and school leaders, to achieve great outcomes for all our children and young people.
- Our partners to support our joint work to achieve ambitious outcomes, for all children and young people
- Our parents and carers to continue to support their children and the Council, to help all our children and young people achieve their ambitions.

Measurements/targets:

- Pupil outcomes and progress for our 7, 11, 14 and 16 year old pupils in English and Maths, particularly our more able and our most vulnerable learners.
- School inspection and school categorisation judgements.
- Progress through our investment programmes.
- Positive views from parents/carers and pupils about our schools.
- The proportion of pupils who arrive late for school or who are persistently absent.
- Post – 16 learner outcomes.

4.1.3 **Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan**

The content of the EAS business plan is clearly aligned to the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan which aims for everyone to have the best start in life. Through this plan it seeks to ensure that the education provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people so that their progress is as good as it ought to be.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1.1 The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by a Collaboration and Members agreement (CAMA) and Articles of Association. Ensuring that the EAS provides value for money is of utmost importance. As recipients of public funding it is important that budgets are allocated wisely. We will endeavour to deliver even better value for money through achieving financial balance and delivering services within the constraints of our budget, making further efficiency savings wherever possible and ensuring delegation rates to schools are maximised.

5.1.2 The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, regional school improvement grants and a service level agreement for governor support services. A spending plan accompanies the Business Plan which is intrinsically linked to all actions contained within it. A detailed overview of the regional distribution of all grants is available for all schools to view and compare allocations and rates of delegation through the regional grant monitoring tool.

5.1.3 Delegation rates to schools has increased to 94% whilst the EAS staff profile by 48% since 2012. An element of the EAS was originally set, a trading income target of £1.25m from schools to enable balanced year end account position. This has now been totally eradicated from income dependency and schools are no longer charged for any training or services provided in line with the business plan.

5.1.4 Local authority funding for consortium working is underpinned by the National Model for Regional Working, published by the Welsh Government in 2014. The model recommended a core funding allocation of £3.6m for the EAS. The current LA core contribution is based on these figures less year on year efficiencies of £1.17m since 2012 agreed in collaboration with the 5 local authorities. The local

authorities' indicative figures for 2020/21 are as follows: Blaenau-Gwent LA's contribution for 2020/21 is £358,985, compared with £364,452 in 2019/20.

5.1.5 The Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA) details the procedure that needs to be followed for all school improvement grants received into the region. All grants are approved by local authority Chief Education Officers / Directors of Education with a follow up ratification from JEG members. Historically there were two main grants received into the region from Welsh Government. Pupil Development Grant (PDG) and Education Improvement Grant (EIG). The latter has been re-designated as the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG) and includes specific initiatives to support the objectives within the 'Education in Wales: Our National Mission'. In addition to the two main grants, two small regional indicative grants were received for SEREN learners.

5.2 **Risks**

5.2.1 Blaenau Gwent LA Risks

- There is Insufficient progress is made in accelerating early language acquisition skills between the ages of 3 to 7.
- Increases in value-added progress in English and maths between key stage 2 and 3 and particularly between key stage 3 and key stage 4, do not have a sufficient impact on key stage 4 outcomes.
- Attainment in English and maths in key stage 3 at Level 6+, remains too low
- Attainment in English and maths (maths in particular) at level 2 in key stage 4 remains too low.
- Value-added progress for our most vulnerable learners, particularly between key stage 3 and key stage 4, does not improve sufficiently

These risks are mitigated through the identification of priorities as seen in the priority areas above and within the detailed within the EAS Business Plan, Blaenau Gwent LA Plans and the Education Strategic Plan.

5.2.2 Regional Risks: As part of the internal EAS risk management process several aspects have been identified as potential barriers to the successful implementation of this Business Plan. These clearly set out the elements that will be important to ensuring optimum impact of the work of the EAS in partnership with LAs. These are:

- Full use is not made of consultation events to help shape the direction of the Business Plan to ensure collective regional ownership of priorities and actions for improvement;
- The work of the EAS in improving outcomes for learners (particularly vulnerable learners) will not be optimised unless there is engagement with all key partners across LAs to ensure effective joint targeting of resources;
- Schools / settings that require improvement are not: identified at an earlier enough stage, accessing /engaging / receiving the most appropriate or effective support, are not held to account in a timely manner using the most appropriate strategies;
- Agreed actions are not carried out in a timely manner by identified parties;

- LA statutory powers are not utilised in a consistent, appropriate and timely way; and
- Uncertain financial projections to enable more effective long-term planning.

5.3 ***Legal***

The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan with accompanying annexes for each of the five Local Authorities (LAs).

5.4 ***Human Resources***

None for this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

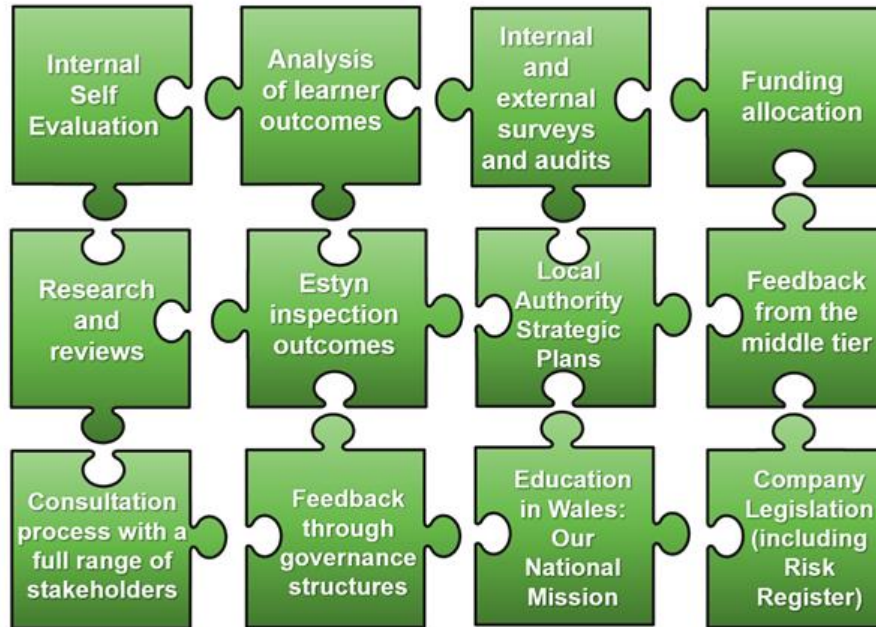
6.1.1 Please note that a mid-year evaluation of the current business plan (2019/20) has been submitted to each of the EAS governance groups and has been available for local authorities to share as appropriate within their own democratic processes (created in November 2019). Within the context of evolving accountability arrangements school and where appropriate under Welsh Government guidance aggregate LA performance data has been presented to this committee in previous reports and this business plan has been informed by that data analysis.

6.1.2 The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and trends within Blaenau Gwent are met through bespoke work with each school. Regional investment in building the capacity of schools and educational settings over the last five years have enabled more collaborative ways of working. This approach is enabling teachers and leaders to learn from each other, to try out new approaches and to engage with educational research as the backdrop for improvement. Across the region there are now a variety of ways in which the EAS supports and challenges school improvement.

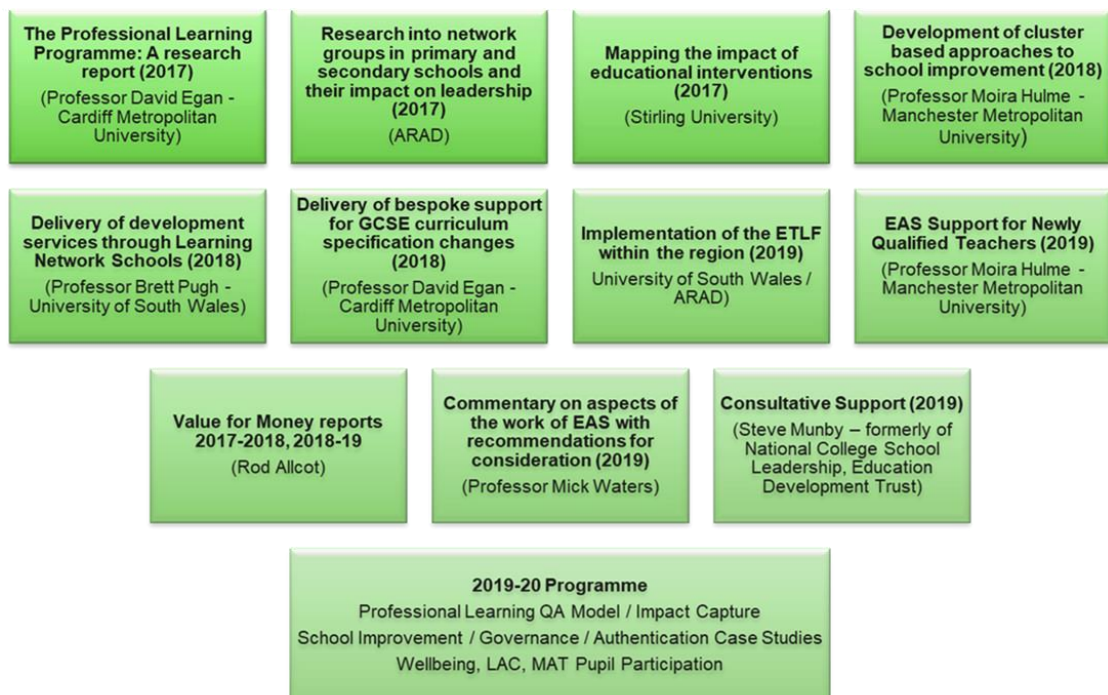
6.1.3 The EAS offers a comprehensive Professional Learning Offer (PLO) to all schools and settings across the region. For the past three years the region has funded schools to deliver a large proportion of the professional learning activity much of which is offered on a cluster basis. Each cluster has an assigned lead for professional learning who organises and co-ordinates support for, and access to professional learning across each of the clusters. In addition, each school has a regionally funded professional learning lead who co-ordinates this work at school level.

6.1.4 All schools are provided with a bespoke support package that compliments the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs) in line with the levels of support they require. The support levels are informed by the national categorisation process, Estyn inspection outcomes or local intelligence. There is a degree of flexibility within the deployment model to allow for in-year changes in circumstances. The progress schools are making towards their priorities within their SDPs and against their local targets are captured on a termly basis are reported to local authorities

6.1.5 For sustained school improvement to happen it is essential that the culture for change is embedded and that all partners work together recognising that each partner (school, LA and EAS) has its role to play in securing improvements. Priorities for the Business Plan have been derived from LA Strategic Plans, the progress that has been made towards the previous Business Plan (as noted in the regional self-evaluation document), and areas that have been identified as requiring improvements. A wide range of information has been reviewed to formulate the priorities within this Business Plan:



6.1.6 A wide range of research has also been undertaken to assist with refining the regional delivery model:



- 6.1.7 The Business Plan is in the consultation process. The Consultees are noted below:
- EAS staff
 - Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
 - Regional Joint Executive Group (JEG)
 - EAS Company Board
 - EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
 - Regional headteachers strategy group
 - Regional governor strategy group
 - Sample of teachers from within the region
 - Sample of school councils from within the region
- 6.1.8 The final version of the Business Plan will be supported by a range of supporting documents:
- Local Authority Annex documents 2020 – 2021
 - Detailed Business Plan 2020–2021
 - Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2020–2021
 - Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
 - EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
 - Regional Professional Learning Offer 2020–2021
 - Local Authority Strategic Education Plans
- 6.1.9 This Business Plan addresses each local authority strategic priority that are indicated with *. These priorities fall within the remit of the work of the EAS. Additionally, the EAS will work in partnership with Blaenau-Gwent LA to support additional local authority priorities, as appropriate.
- 6.1.10 The EAS will support the LA in their statutory responsibility of securing that their education and training functions are exercised with a view to promoting high standards and promoting the fulfilment of learning potential.

Blaenau-Gwent Strategic Priorities 2020-21 (as provided by the LA):

Strategic priorities for 2020/2021	Main link (s) to the improvement strands within the Business Plan
Accelerating early language acquisition skills between the ages of 3 to 7.*	1, 2 and 3
To increase value-added progress in English and maths between key stage 2 and 3 and particularly between key stage 3 and key stage 4.*	1, 2 and 3
To increase attainment in English and maths in key stage 3 at Level 6+.*	1, 2 and 3
To improve attainment in English and maths (maths in particular) at level 2 in key stage 4*	1, 2 and 3

To improve value-added progress for our most vulnerable learners, particularly between key stage 3 and key stage 4.*	1, 2 and 3
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6.1.11 EAS Improvement Strands:

Improvement Strand	Description
1	i) Developing a high-quality education profession ii) Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards
2	Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and wellbeing
3	Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability mechanisms, supporting a self-improvement system
4	EAS Business Development

6.1.12 Each improvement strand within this plan has a specific emphasis on the work of the EAS in promoting improved outcomes for vulnerable learners, in particular those in receipt of FSM and specific actions that are undertaken to improve secondary schools. These strategies are based on a wide range of research evidence. It will be important that all other stakeholders, including Blaenau Gwent LA and schools, have their own specific strategies to support vulnerable learners.

6.1.12 The actions contained within the plan align with the Welsh Government strategic document Education in Wales: Our National Mission (Action Plan 2017-2021), are based upon findings from educational research and best practice and address the priorities in each local authority strategic plan. As a result of internal self-evaluation we still need to work with local authorities to:

- Ensure that schools that require the highest levels of support and / or in Statutory Categories secure improvement within an acceptable timescale (within 2 years) to reduce their support level and / or be removed from a statutory category.
- Consider a more strategic approach to identifying the next group of headteachers in the region. Further develop the executive headship role so that the very best leaders can make an impact in more than one school.
- Provide effective intervention, challenge, support and capacity-building. Continue to be clear about the bottom lines for intervention and continue to refuse to compromise when children are losing out on a good education. In most cases the focus should be on capacity-building.
- Develop a talent management and leadership framework that focuses on middle leadership development on individual schools and clusters rather than mixed cohorts
- Retain a high bar for the identification of those who can provide support for other schools, continuing to focus on quality and ensuring due diligence and brokering the best from within and outside the region.

- Continue to build the capacity of governing bodies within the region by revising the delivery model for governor training, aligned to the cluster model and provide bespoke professional learning to secondary governing bodies to enable them to undertake their roles effectively.
- Further strengthen the governance arrangements by appointing high quality non-executive directors who can provide additional expertise and independent external challenge.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, to include skills development, in identified secondary schools in order to secure improved learner progress, outcomes and engagement in learning, particularly for vulnerable learners.
- Retain a high bar for the identification of those who can provide support for other schools, continuing to focus on quality and ensuring due diligence and brokering the best from within and outside the region

6.1.13

As a result of internal self-evaluation, we still need to work with local authorities and schools to:

- Continue to develop bespoke and school led peer review models focussing on improving the quality of teaching and learning that build mutual and reciprocal peer support and challenge.
- Continue to be clear about what the role of EAS is around the wellbeing and equity agenda. Continue to champion and to integrate the work and to stay focused on EAS priorities.
- Develop a boarder range of evaluation strategies that identifies that does not focus solely on end of key stage outcomes but looks at a range of teaching and leadership behaviours that would be a result of a support or intervention strategy.
- Further strengthen the governance arrangements by appointing high quality non-executive directors who can provide additional expertise and independent external challenge.
- Continue to promote succession planning within EAS and to empower the broader leadership team, especially when it comes to exposure to governance and to the production of strategic reports.

6.1.14

As a result of internal self-evaluation, we still need to work with local authorities and schools to:

- Secure the effective implementation of curriculum for Wales in all schools and settings. Engage in consultations that support the reform agenda.
- Engage in two pilot programmes for schools causing concern and the implementation of the National Resource for School Improvement.
- Design and deliver national professional learning.
- Ensure that elected members are fully apprised of changes to accountability arrangements.
- To secure an indicative 3-year grant funding model.

6.1.15 **LA Annex Documents**

Each LA Annex contains an overview of national categorisation for the LA, a summary of the schools in any Estyn follow-up category, aggregate pupil progress information, attendance / exclusion information and a summary of key performance areas.

The improvements that are required at regional and local authority level require a strong commitment of partnership-working to be successful. Where local authorities and the EAS work in close partnership, there is evidence, particularly with regards to schools causing concern, that rapid and sustainable school improvement can be achieved.

6.1.16 **How does the EAS support schools to identify and address their school improvement priorities?**

Regional investment in building the capacity of schools and educational settings over the last five years have enabled more collaborative ways of working. This approach is enabling teachers and leaders to learn from each other, to try out new approaches and to engage with educational research as the backdrop for improvement. Across the region there are now a variety of ways in which the EAS supports and challenges school improvement. The impact and effectiveness of the strategies are reviewed regularly through both internal and external processes. A summary of these supporting strategies are below:

- The role of the challenge adviser in supporting, brokering and challenging the pace of progress schools make in addressing their identified school priorities;
- The role of EAS officers (including subject specific support, support for governors, wellbeing and equity) in supporting, brokering and challenging the pace of progress schools make in addressing their identified school priorities;
- Access to funded school networks that support all aspects of professional development and school improvement focused on improving the quality of leadership and teaching and learning;
- Access to a wide range of professional learning, some with accreditation options, for teaching assistants, teachers, school leaders and governors;
- Peer working and peer reviews;
- The use of trained and accredited coaches and mentors for teachers and leaders, sourced from within and beyond; and
- Access to eLearning materials and high-quality resources.

6.1.17 **Working in partnership with local authorities, schools and setting the ambitions for 2020/21 and beyond are:**

- Overall the number of schools requiring the highest levels of support continues to decrease and when a school is placed within a statutory category it will be removed within an acceptable timeframe agreed with the LA.
- All schools and settings engaged in the pilot programme will have developed a bespoke teaching and learning strategy for their schools.

- Nearly all secondary schools have engaged with a PL programme for cross curriculum skills development and have improved their provision as a result.
- Nearly all schools have wellbeing and equity as a key area within their SDPs and will poverty proof the cost of the school day.
- The quality of SDPs within the secondary phase continue to improve with many being at least good
- Nearly all schools maximise their capped 9 performance through a focus on breadth and quality of provision for all learners.
- All school leadership teams and the majority of middle leaders and teachers will have engaged with the PL programme to support the implementation of the curriculum for Wales.
- Nearly all schools will develop as effective learning organisations.
- Nearly all schools are demonstrating progress against the national language charter framework objectives.
- A regional professional learning programme and talent management framework will be implemented to identify and track aspirational leaders.
- The region has a comprehensive leadership development pathway for aspiring and existing leaders.
- All secondary schools causing concern will be held to account by each LA for the pace of progress and where this is too slow appropriate action will be taken.
- The model for delivery of governor training will be reviewed and revised.
- Worked collaboratively with middle tier partners to support the realisation of the national mission.
- A majority of Chairs and Vice Chairs of governors within the secondary phase will be better equipped to support and challenge the pace of improvement within their schools.
- The revised learning network schools model will be implemented focusing on quality and ensuring due diligence and brokering the best from within and outside the region.
- Bespoke and school led peer review models demonstrate impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning in identified schools.
- An online resource to support teaching and learning will be developed to exemplify and share best practice across the region.
- A LA based online resource for Health and Wellbeing will be created for schools to signpost to a range of provision and partners.
- A boarder range of evaluation strategies will be developed and used that does not focus solely on end of key stage outcomes but looks at a range of teaching and leadership behaviours that would be seen as a result of a support or intervention strategy
- The delegation rate to schools is maintained at 94%.
- Governance arrangements will be strengthened, and additional non-executive directors will be appointed to the company board.
- Succession planning within the broader leadership team of the EAS is improved with team members having more exposure to governance meetings and to the production of strategic reports.

- 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
High Quality education is a fundamental pre-requisite of ensuring future local and national prosperity through the provision of an informed and well-educated workforce and society. The Local Authority's statutory role to monitor and evaluate school performance and the quality of provision, coupled with its statutory powers of intervention in schools causing concern is fundamental to ensuring that all schools provide high quality education provision.
- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
Involvement of partners is fundamental to securing and sustaining school improvement. The statutory framework advocates this and the work of the Local authority, its commissioned school improvement service (EAS) and schools evidences the positive impact of working in this way.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
The SEWC regional framework seeks to ensure that schools deliver high quality provision and standards in the long term.
- The business plan that is being consulted upon for 2020/2021 is clearly aligned with this approach.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***
A key element of the Council's work is to monitor settings and ensure appropriate support to secure continuing high standards. Estyn Inspection reports reflect the extent to which settings and Local Authorities has been effective in achieving this.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
Educational improvement in Blaenau Gwent is delivered on a regional basis through the South East Wales Consortium in collaboration with Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
The Estyn Inspection Framework is aimed at promoting high standards and high-quality education provision. This aim is fundamental to the Council's well-being objectives and is fundamental to the joint work between Education and Social Services Directorates.
- 6.8 ***EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***
Not required for this report.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 The South East Wales Consortium is required to submit to the Welsh Government a three-year business plan that will be updated annually. This plan and the Blaenau Gwent LA Annex cover the period 2020-2021. This meets the requirements set out in the Welsh Government's National Model for Regional Working. The business plan addresses all aspects in support of improvements across the school and settings in Blaenau-Gwent and through this consultation activity members will ensure that the plan enables appropriate support for schools to improve and that all pupils reach their potential across Blaenau Gwent.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- A. The South-East Wales Regional Mission: Business Plan (2020-2021) (First Draft for Consultation)
- B. Draft LA Annex Document 2020/2021