Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi

YMCHWIL GYMDEITHASOL
Y LLYWODRAETH

GSR

GOVERNMENT SOCIAL RESEARCH

Analysis for Policy

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

Ymchwil gymdeithasol
Social research

Evaluation of the Learning and Skills Measure

Evaluation of the Learning and Skills Measure

Andrew Magee, York Consulting

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Assembly Government

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. In April 2009, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) commissioned York Consulting (YCL), in association with Old Bell 3, to undertake research to inform the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure (the Measure).

2. The broad aims of the research were to focus on the likely impacts of the Measure on the 14-19 Learning Pathways nationally and to assess the degree to which wider choice is secured as a result of policy implementation, supported by the Measure.

3. The research consisted of the following activities:

   - interviews with key stakeholders/task and finish group members;
   - review of curriculum data and related analysis;
   - review of area inspection reports;
   - initial discussions with 14-19 Network Co-ordinators and WAG staff;
   - a survey of all local authority 14-19 Coordinators;
   - analysis of curriculum take-up data;
   - case study visits to six local authority areas, comprising consultations with Network Coordinators; other Local Authority (LA) staff; school and college leaders; Learning Coaches; and pupils;
   - we also reviewed the Annual Network Development Plans (ANDPs) in each area in which we conducted case study fieldwork.

Impact of the Measure

4. The overall impact of the Measure thus far appears to have been positive. The Measure has led to an increase in partnership working in many areas, often bringing forward collaborative working, which stakeholders often felt would have otherwise taken longer to achieve.

5. The KS4 curriculum offer requirements for 2009/10 were met by the vast majority of schools. Moreover, almost two-thirds (63%) of schools are already meeting the expectations of the Measure for 2012.

6. The Measure has impacted upon providers to different extents. Some have had to make few changes to accommodate its requirements, while others with little prior experience of working collaboratively have been affected to the greatest extent.

7. Learners have taken-up the widened curriculum offer in significant numbers, with the vast majority of courses offered being run. These results show that there is learner demand for a wider profile of courses.

8. The recent developments of collaborative working and the curriculum offer have occurred in spite of a range of challenges and issues faced on a local basis.

9. In particular, perceptions of vocational qualifications among parents and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) may influence their take-up.

Collaborative Working

10. We have found that there has been an improvement in the level of collaborative working between providers over the last two years, and there is scope for this to improve further.

11. Providers have started to see the benefits of partnership working as the curriculum offer has widened and the relationship between partnering organisations has improved through mutual trust and understanding.

12. Nevertheless, some significant challenges still exist. There remain some schools – particularly those with high achievement rates - who have not fully engaged with the partnership working ethos, possibly because they have not offered vocational courses in the past or they want to maintain the quality of their existing provision. In addition, schools in more rural locations may find it particularly difficult to collaborate with others.

13. Other challenges include the resource implications and logistics of working together.

Resource Implications

14. The research consistently found that providers were very concerned about the cost implications of partnership working and of meeting the requirements of the Measure.

15. Some efficiency gains have been found, including the reduced duplication of courses offered within a locality. However, these savings have been outweighed by the costs of collaboration that have arisen through the cost of providing transport and the additional costs associated with vocational provision.

16. Furthermore, while some areas report that they have found cost savings by eliminating small class sizes, other areas have found the converse. In these areas costs have increased because of an increase in the number of small class sizes as a result of the vocational offer they have in place: the same number of pupils (or, in some cases due to falling school roles, a reduced number) are now taking a larger number of courses.

17. The models used to fund offsite or vocational provisions vary by area. Some models can incentivise collaborative working by making the marginal cost of courses effectively zero, as they are centrally funded. In other models, funding follows the learner, which ensures that funding is balanced between the pupil's 'home' school and the 'host' provider.

Welsh Medium Provision

18. In the main, provision at Welsh medium schools is affected by the Measure in the same way as all schools across Wales, however some of the issues are writ larger as a result of the isolated location of many Welsh medium schools.

19. The research found examples of long-standing collaborative arrangements among Welsh medium schools and, at the other extreme, of schools which had been prompted into collaborative working only as a result of the Measure.

20. We found that Welsh medium schools tended to be more innovative in the solutions they identified, perhaps as a result of their more isolated, rural location. Welsh medium schools tended to be making more use of peripatetic teachers; cross-border collaboration and of ICT facilities, such as video conferencing.

21. We also found that vocational course assessments were not always available in the Welsh medium.

Logistics

22. Logistical issues, such as timetabling, transport and the rural location of some schools were often highlighted as significant barriers to collaboration. These issues are not insurmountable in themselves; however, taken together they can make collaborative working seem unachievable.

23. The logistical challenges faced by providers require joint working at a local level to identify the most effective way forward and overcome the difficulties.

This joint working requires strong leadership from the partnership and an innovative, 'can-do' attitude from network members.

24. Solutions have been found to many of the early problems identified and, given time, further solutions will be found to the remaining issues.

25. Providers in rural locations face the most significant logistical challenges. The current response to the Measure from most providers is to transport pupils between institutions. However, the costs of transport may make it unsustainable in the long-term.

Learning Support

26. A major development that has occurred in Learner Support has been the introduction of the Learning Coach function. Each young person in Wales between the ages of 11-25 should receive support from a Learning Coach. The Learning and Skills Measure has enshrined the right to a Learning Coach in law.

27. We found that providers have taken the Learning Coach function forward to varying extents. Some decided that their existing Learner Support provision included the Learning Coach function to the degree that they did not feel the need to change what they were already doing. Others have taken the Learning Coach function forward more vigorously.

28. Various examples from the spectrum of Learning Coach roles are described in the report, including those for whom the Learning Coach function is a full-time position, and others for whom it is a relatively small element of their job.

Conclusions and Recommendations

29. The Measure has had a positive impact on collaborative working already. The number of courses offered by schools has increased to meet the needs of the Measure's banding requirements in 2009/10. Many schools have

already made significant progress towards meeting the offer required by the Measure next year and even in 2012.

30. Those providers who had a limited amount of involvement in partnership working previously and could work with others relatively easily are likely to have seen the greatest change since the introduction of the Measure, as they have been encouraged to become more active participants in local collaborative groups.

31. The four main recommendations emanating from the research are:
    - **Recommendation One: Improve Course Data Collection**
        − some more detailed take-up data is required to monitor the impact of the Measure over the longer term;
    - **Recommendation Two: Marketing Of Vocational Qualifications**
        − to overcome parental (and potentially HEI) concerns about the value of vocational qualifications;
    - **Recommendation Three: Encourage LAs to Learn from Good Practice in Partnership Working**
        − a strong LA presence in local networks is a key success factor in the effectiveness of those networks;
    - **Recommendation Four: Review Effectiveness of Learning Coach Roles**
        − Learning Coach roles appear varied. Therefore, reviewing the effectiveness of the different roles is important to ensure all young people have access to the best quality of support.
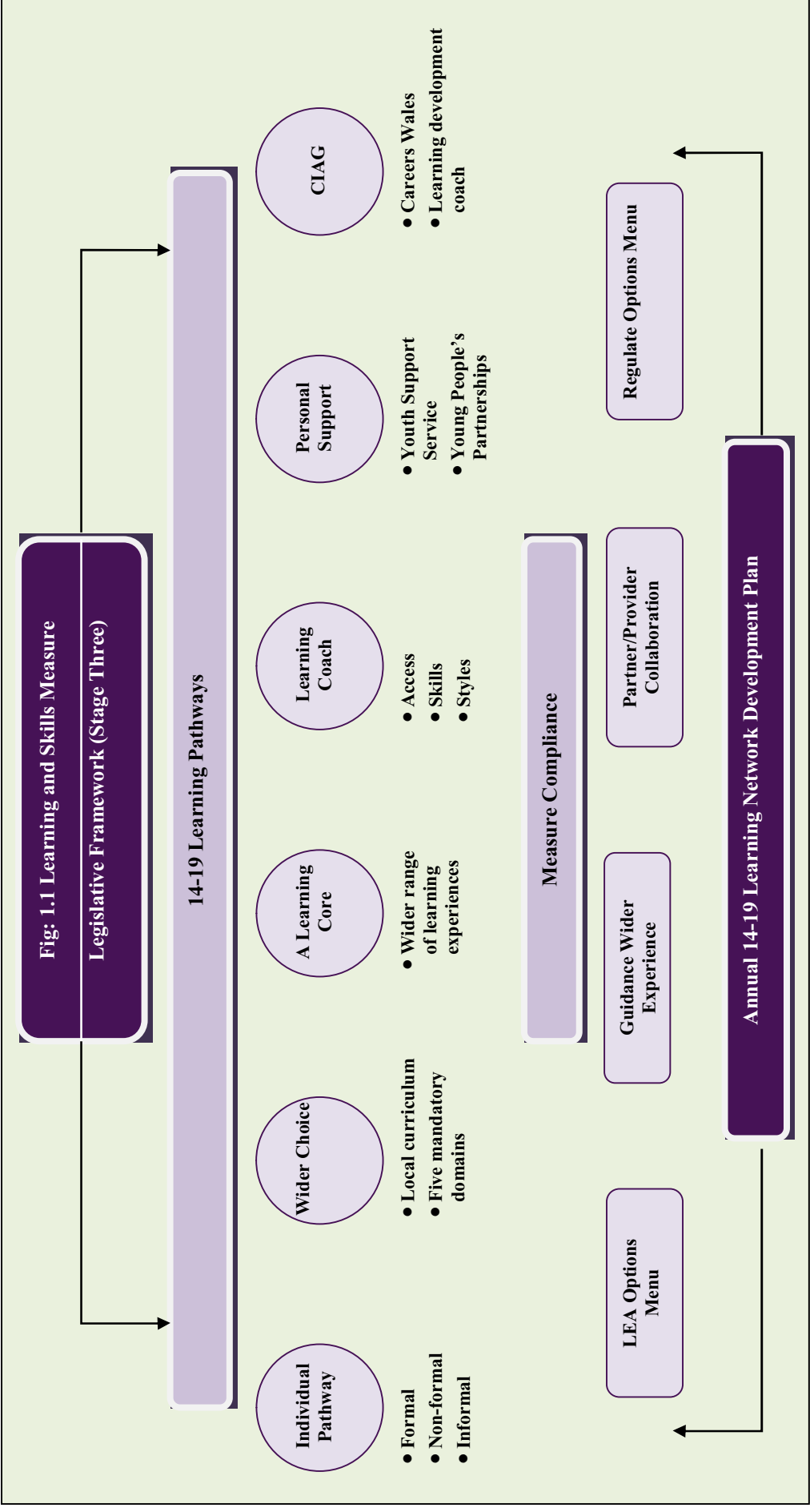
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In April 2009, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) commissioned York Consulting (YCL), in association with Old Bell 3, to undertake research to inform the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure (the Measure).

Learning and Skills Measure Background

Learning Pathways Policy

1.2 The 14-19 Learning Pathways Policy was launched in 2004, seeking to develop a blend of wider curriculum choice and high quality learner support that assists young people in the achievement of their full potential. The Learning Pathways policy achieves this through building upon existing good practice and promoting cooperation and joint working amongst providers of learning.

1.3 The six key elements of the learning pathway are:

- **individual pathway** - including formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences in and outside the learning setting;

- **wider choice** - the option menu for each learner is referred to in the measure as the local curriculum, it reflects the entitlement to a choice of programmes of study, leading to qualifications from the wide range set out in the approved list;

- **learning core** - the core includes aspects of the basic curriculum for 14-16 year olds in maintained schools such as religious education, personal and social education, work-related education and sex education;

- **learning coach** - all 14-19 year olds are required to have access to Learning Coach support to assist them in: developing their learning skills; making better use of and developing their own learning styles; maximising their own development;

Fig: 1.1 Learning and Skills Measure

Legislative Framework (Stage Three)

14-19 Learning Pathways

Individual Pathway
- Formal
- Non-formal
- Informal

Wider Choice
- Local curriculum
- Five mandatory domains

A Learning Core
- Wider range of learning experiences

Learning Coach
- Access
- Skills
- Styles

Personal Support
- Youth Support Service
- Young People's Partnerships

CIAG
- Careers Wales
- Learning development coach

Measure Compliance

Guidance Wider Experience

Partner/Provider Collaboration

LEA Options Menu

Annual 14-19 Learning Network Development Plan

Regulate Options Menu

- **personal support** - most young people experience personal social health and emotional issues therefore this type of support can be critical in maintaining engagement/attendance;
- **careers advice and guidance** – impartial support is an important element which will influence future decision-making by young people.

1.4 The Learning Pathways policy has been delivered via 14-19 Learning Networks. There are 22 networks in Wales, based on local authority area boundaries. These 14-19 Networks are strategic partnerships which set strategic priorities for the area over a three year timeframe. The 14-19 Networks assist in securing the range of programmes and support necessary to ensure learners have access to all elements of Learning Pathways.

Annual Network Development Plan (ANDP)

1.5 An Annual Network Development Plan is produced by each Network area and remains an important instrument in improving learning outcomes through securing wider curriculum choice and high quality learner support.

1.6 The ANDP is a requirement of the additional grant funding available to support the implementation of 14-19 Learning Pathways locally. Whilst the ANDP covers a three year period it must be submitted annually to enable 14-19 Networks to access the additional 14-19 funding. If the additional funding is mainstreamed, ANDPs will no longer be required.

Learning and Skills Measure (Wales) 2008

1.7 The Measure is a key legislative component in the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for transforming provision for learners across Wales. The Measure underpins the 14-19 Learning Pathways policy and is integral to the Welsh Assembly Government's '*Skills that Work for Wales*[1] Strategy that establishes a distinctive Welsh agenda for education and training.

---

[1] Skills That Work for Wales: A Skills and Employment Strategy and Action Plan, July 2008 WAG

1.8   The Measure includes an entitlement for learners to access a wide range of general and vocational courses, and places a duty on providers to co-operate. It is expected that the Measure will influence the curriculum in schools and the way that schools operate, especially in relation to how they work in partnership with other providers in their area.

1.9   The objectives of Sections 13 and 32 of the Measure are to maximise the availability of courses of study included in a local curriculum. Local Authorities should seek to maximise the curriculum offer, rather than simply to meet its minimum requirements.

Transformation Agenda

1.10 The Welsh Assembly Government document Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales was published in the autumn of 2008. The aims of the Transformation Agenda are to improve learner outcomes, reduce economic inactivity and to improve the level of skills of those who are already in employment.

1.11 The Transformation Agenda is driven by the development of the 14-19 Learning Pathways Policy, through the Measure. The initiative reflected the view that, although progress had been made in these areas, it was not consistent across Wales. A clearer focus was needed to eliminate duplication and inefficiencies, and to develop collaboration across the sector.

Study Aims and Objectives

1.12 The broad aims of the research were to focus on the likely impacts of the Measure on the 14-19 Learning Pathways nationally (including providers and individual learners) and to assess the degree to which wider choice is secured as a result of policy implementation, supported by the Measure.

1.13 The specific objectives of the study were to assess the progress in implementing the 14-19 Learning Pathways, as set out in the proposed Learning and Skills Measure, and the likely developments to full roll out, including the following:

- the impact of the Measure in its aim of widening curriculum choice and improving learner support via promoting cooperation and joint working amongst learning providers;

- the impact of the Measure in its aim of stimulating improvements in efficiency via cooperation and joint working amongst providers;

- the impact of the 14-19 Learning Pathways agenda on the expansion of Welsh Medium/Bilingual provision in curricular and non-curricular areas;

- gather information on success factors for sustainability, e.g. examples of efficiency gains, from a range of networks;

- identify any barriers or constraints that have impeded the implementation of the policy to date;

- collect and analyse data on progress towards full implementation of the options offer;

- assess the likely impact of changing options due to the policy on existing expenditure patterns;

- provide recommendations on information to support implementation and evaluation of the policy and how the needs can be addressed.

Methodology

1.14 The initial research consisted of the following activities, which informed the first phase of activity, the 'Helicopter Review' of emerging issues:

- interviews with 13 key stakeholders/task and finish group members;

- review of curriculum data and related analysis;

- review of area inspection reports for Wrexham and Caerphilly;

- discussions with 14-19 Network Coordinators and WAG staff at the DCELLS 14-19 Network Conference in Llandrindod Wells on 3 July 2009.

1.15 We have subsequently undertaken a range of activities, which have constituted the main fieldwork of the research. These activities have included:

- a survey of all local authority 14-19 Coordinators (completed by 20 out of 22 authorities);

- analysis of curriculum take-up data which WAG collected from Local Authorities;

- case study visits to six local authority areas, comprising consultations with:

  - the Network Coordinator/LEA Partnership lead in each area (six);

  - six other LEA or Network staff involved in facilitating collaborative working (e.g. 14-19 advisors);

  - 14 schools and 6 colleges across the six case study areas;

  - 12 school Headteachers and four assistant/deputy Headteachers (across the 14 schools);

  - six college principals or assistant principals and two 14-19 college representatives;

  - 10 Learning Coaches; and

  - 10 student focus group discussions with over 40 young people in total from a mix of schools and colleges;

- we also reviewed the Annual Network Development Plans (ANDPs) in each area in which we conducted case study fieldwork.

1.16 The research also included the development of a paper considering the potential performance indicators that could be used to support future evaluations of the Learning and Skills Measure. The paper is provided in Appendix A.

Case Study Areas

1.17 The case study areas were selected to be representative of the four regions of Wales, Learning and Skills Measure bandings and urban/rural contexts (**Table 1.1**):

Table 1.1: Case Study Areas				
	Context	**Region**	**Banding**[2]	**Post-16 System**
Caerphilly	Urban/Rural	South East Wales	A	Mixed, colleges and schools with sixth forms
Cardiff	Urban	South East Wales	A	Mixed, colleges and schools with sixth forms
Gwynedd	Rural	North Wales	C	Two areas one tertiary and one mixed with a single college and schools with sixth forms
Neath and Port Talbot (NPT)	Urban/Rural	West Wales	B	Tertiary (two schools with sixth forms)
Pembrokeshire	Rural	West Wales	B	Mixed, colleges and schools with sixth forms
Powys	Rural	Mid Wales	C	Mixed, colleges and schools with sixth forms

Report Structure

1.18 This report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** evaluates the impact that the Measure has had on collaborative provision, with analysis of the curriculum offer and pupil take-up;

- **Section 3** describes the changes in collaborative working that have occurred and the challenges that have been faced in working in partnership;

- **Section 4** highlights the resource implications that have resulted from collaborative working in terms of efficiency savings and additional costs;

- **Section 5** concentrates on the challenges and issues faced in delivering Welsh medium provision;

- **Section 6** considers the logistical requirements of widening the curriculum offer, including offsite provision;

- **Section 7** illustrates the role of Learner Support, and Learning Coaches in particular;

- **Section 8** provides recommendations for the future development and implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure.

---

[2] The banding arrangement recognises the different states of preparedness with regard to wider choice for pupils across Wales. Local Authorities placed in Band A were considered 'more prepared' to meet the Measure's curriculum offer requirements; those in Band C had a greater distance to travel.

2   IMPACT OF THE MEASURE

2.1   The overall impact of the Measure thus far appears to have been positive. The Measure has led to an increase in partnership working in many areas, often bringing forward collaborative working, which stakeholders often felt would have otherwise taken longer to achieve.

2.2   The KS4 curriculum offer requirements for 2009/10 were met by the vast majority of schools. Moreover, almost two-thirds (63%) of schools are already meeting the expectations of the Measure for 2012[3].

2.3   The recent developments of collaborative working and the curriculum offer have occurred in spite of a range of challenges and issues faced on a local basis.

2.4   This section contains:

- views on the overall impact of the Measure thus far;
- analysis of the curriculum offered by providers across Wales;
- analysis of take-up data; and
- an introduction to the issues that affect the offer and take-up.

Impact of the Measure

2.5   Consultees reported a wide range of opinions on the impact that the Measure has had. Overall, it is clear that the Measure has had a positive impact on collaborative provision, however, it is not the only factor that has led to providers working more collaboratively and offering a wider range of courses.

2.6   While provisions outlined in the Measure may have happened eventually, the Measure has brought forward change. For example, 19 of the 20 network coordinators responding to the survey at least partially attribute an increase in the curriculum offer to the Measure, with two of those fully attributing any increase to the Measure (**Table 2.1**):

---

[3] WAG Curriculum Data.

Table 2.1: 'To what extent can any increase in the curriculum offer be attributed to the Learning and Skills Measure?'	
Fully	2
Partially	17
Limited	1
None, it would have happened anyway without the Measure	0
Don't Know	0

Survey of Local Authority14-19 Coordinators

2.7 The Measure was effectively a signal of intent from the Welsh Assembly Government (during its period of development from initial announcement to date). It gave all schools and providers a clear indication of the importance that DCELLS attached to collaborative working and that the drive to increase such collaboration would not be receding. Stakeholder consultees felt that the Measure has 'strengthened the hand' of local authorities and 14-19 networks.

2.8 When asked to explain the extent to which any increase in the curriculum offer could be attributed to the Measure, some coordinators said that the Measure provided a '*catalyst*' for change or that it *'focused/concentrated minds'* (Four respondents).

> *"There has always been a desire to expand the offer and make it better match the needs of learners. The Measure has acted as a catalyst to give this process a greater sense of urgency and a penalty if a partnership did not succeed."* (Network Coordinator)

> *"…the Measure has undoubtedly led to an increase in the curriculum offer on the back of an already existing momentum to expand that offer."* (Network Coordinator)

2.9 However, one other survey respondent cautioned that attribution of any increase in the offer to the Measure may be limited:

"Much of this work was on-going before the Measure and would have taken place anyway given falling rolls in schools, pressures on the public purse and the direction of travel of a proactive local authority in relation to collaborative learning." (Network Coordinator)

Differing Perceptions in Same Areas

2.10 Within the same case study areas, school and network members had different views on the impact of the Measure. For example, one area coordinator was of the opinion that the Measure was an important tool as it sent out a message regarding the importance of collaboration and its legislative nature also reinforced that the push on collaboration would not recede.

"Some of the schools in the area may have thought that the 14-19 agenda was all hot air and would go away if they ignored it, but the Measure has changed that." (Network Coordinator)

2.11 However, one of the schools within this area felt that the Measure was not the main driver of their move to collaborate. Instead, they felt that their recent increase in collaboration had occurred in order to stave off competition from Sixth Forms and colleges from outside their area.

"For us, the driver in collaboration has had little to do with the legislative imperative and everything to do with competition from across the border." (School Headteacher)

Time and Patience required to see Changes Occur

2.12 Survey respondents and stakeholders noted that there would be a time-lag between increased collaborative working resulting in a wider curriculum offer. Stakeholders felt that there may be a need for some 'loss leaders' in the short term before a critical mass of demand was established which would make collaborative provision sustainable. In one area both the LEA and Chair of the 14-19 Network said that it would take time for the impact of the Measure to be seen in changes in take-up.

> *"A key message from us to WAG is that patience is needed now to get the return on investment on the demand side and take up. They (WAG) really must avoid any knee jerk reaction based on data that shows low take up levels initially."* (Network Coordinator)

2.13 The early signs from the various strands of fieldwork indicate that the Measure is having an impact on collaborative working and the curriculum offer it results in. However, it may take some time for the full benefits of collaborative working to be realised as the challenges facing delivery at a local level are overcome.

Influence on Different Providers

2.14 The effect of the Measure is likely to be greater on different providers. In the case of secondary schools, for example, smaller schools in more rural locations will be affected to a greater extent by the needs of the Measure than large schools in urban settings.

<u>Smaller, Rural Schools</u>

2.15 There was a view from some consultees that the influence of the Measure is likely to have been greater on those schools who were furthest from meeting its requirements. Those providers were more likely to be smaller, rural secondaries, where collaboration was starting from a lower base.

> *"The Measure was a driver for the schools most directly under threat from it. Smaller, rural schools lack the critical mass or strength in depth to be able to expand their curriculum whereas larger schools can adapt and take advantage of economies of scale more easily."* (Network Coordinator)

2.16 While some schools had seen the Measure as the 'starting gun' for collaborative efforts, others had unfortunately taken it as a threat.

"In the past you have to remember that these schools have had total autonomy. Before the legislation the curriculum was the entire responsibility of the head. The Measure has removed some of that autonomy and as a result, unfortunately in some cases what you immediately get is fear. The challenge for us in the LEA is to manage that and make it happen." (Network Coordinator)

Welsh Medium Schools

2.17 Welsh medium schools are not a homogeneous group. We found that the Measure has impacted to a differing extent on Welsh medium schools depending upon their background and history of collaborative working. Some Welsh medium schools had well established partnership arrangements with other schools/colleges prior to the Measure being introduced, while others were encouraged to enter into partnerships as a result of the Measure.

Larger Schools with Sixth Forms

2.18 At the opposite end of the spectrum, consultees told us that they expected the Measure to have less influence over some of the larger providers, especially those located in more urban areas. Larger schools have a greater opportunity to meet the needs of the Measure, without having to enter into as much collaborative work with other schools. However, this approach does not reflect the Measure's requirements for the curriculum offer to be maximised. Instead, it reflects a tendency to meet the minimum curriculum requirements of the Measure.

2.19 There is some evidence of larger schools developing their own arrangements; for example, delivering courses themselves through the medium of Welsh rather than collaborating with other schools and colleges.

<u>Academically Focused Schools</u>

2.20 Schools that have historically offered an academically focused curriculum, with little vocational provision, are likely to require the greatest cultural change to meet the Measure. Pupils and parents tend not to have the same regard for vocational qualifications as they do for the 'traditional' academic route and the schools themselves are unlikely to have participated in much collaborative work previously. A culture change may be required among schools to regard others as potential partners, rather than as competitors.

Curriculum Offer

Key Stage 4 Requirements

2.21 The Education (Local Curriculum for Pupils in Key Stage 4) (Wales) Regulations 2009 (the local curriculum regulations) set out that by 2012, each local curriculum must contain at least 30 courses and score at least 780 curriculum points[4], incorporating at least five vocational courses of study.

2.22 In the lead up to the 2012 target coming into force, areas have been placed into different bands, reflecting their level of development towards meeting the 2012 requirement. The most developed areas (Band A) were targeted to achieve an offer of 28 courses in 2009/10; they will meet the full, 30 course entitlement of the Measure in 2010. Band B will reach 28 courses in 2010 (from 26 in 09/10) and Band C will rise to 26 (from 24 in 09/10). The requirements of each banding will rise by two courses each year until the 30 course mark has been reached.

Meeting KS4 Offer Requirements

2.23 For the academic year 2009/10, the overwhelming majority of schools (93%) met their curriculum offer requirement. This provides a strong indication that schools are on course towards meeting the 2012 target.

---

[4] Curriculum points are awarded according to the courses of study on offer. For example, a Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in Mathematics is worth 20 points. The points value for each course of study is set out in the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales (www.daqw.org.uk).

Table 2.2 Meeting Band Requirement for Offer		
No	16	7%
Yes	206	93%
Total	**222**	

2.24 Schools which were required to offer more courses in 2009 were more likely to struggle to meet the target; however, the vast majority of schools met their requirement. Of the 16 schools currently not meeting their banding requirement, 13 were required to offer a minimum of 28 courses in 2009/10 (Band A). The three remaining schools were Band B schools, required to offer 26 courses this year.

2.25 It is to be expected that those schools required to offer the highest number of courses would be more likely not to meet the target. Given the early stage of development of collaborative working, the numbers of schools not meeting their requirement appears very low. This should be monitored closely over the next two years to ensure schools continue to progress towards meeting the Measure.

2.26 Presently, just over three-quarters of schools (76%) are already meeting the KS4 curriculum requirement for 2010/11 and almost two-thirds (63%) are meeting the 2012 requirement[5] (based on the number of courses offered in academic year 2009/10 and the requirement for courses to be offered in 2010/11).

Recent Increase in KS4 Offer

2.27 Between 2008 and 2009 there was a rapid increase in the number of courses being offered by KS4 providers across Wales. The number of providers meeting their Banding Requirement for the number of courses they offer increased from 71 in 2008 (32%) to the vast majority in 2009 (201, 90%). The change in the number of providers meeting the 2009 Measure requirements are shown in **Table 2.3** below.

---

[5] WAG Curriculum Data

Table 2.3 Providers Meeting Band Requirement for Offer: 2008 v 2009[6]		
	2008	2009
Yes	71	201
No	120	21
N/A	32	1
Total	**223**	**223**

2.28 Furthermore, when looking crudely at the KS4 courses offered across Wales, there appears to have been a 50% increase in courses offered to learners from 2008 to 2009 from 4,654 to 6,985. Providers offered learners an average of 24.4 courses in 2008; this figure leapt to 34.5 in 2009[7].

2.29 The rapid increase in courses offered to learners may not be a result of an equivalent rise in provision on the same sites. Instead, it may reflect an increase in partnership working, whereby young people now have access to existing courses that were already being offered at other sites.

2.30 As mentioned above, some consultees and stakeholders have commented that change to the curriculum offer would have occurred without the Measure. However, we feel that it is highly unlikely that the pace of change would have been as swift as we have seen over the past year without the Measure in place and providers being aware that it was coming into force.

Curriculum Take-up

2.31 There was considerable discussion during the case study fieldwork with regard to the credibility of the curriculum offer made to students. The take-up of the current curriculum offer suggests that the offer is being widely taken up by learners. Below, we provide some analysis of the take-up data before describing the views reported by consultees.

---

[6] Based on WAG Curriculum Data
[7] Further data analysis on the offer and take-up of vocational courses or offsite provision has not included in this report due to concerns about its robustness. Collecting this data, and ensuring it is robust, will be critical in monitoring the long-term success of the Measure and the Learning Pathways policy.

Data on Take-up

2.32 Data on the number of courses being taken by learners in each school suggests that the curriculum offer is being widely taken up and is 'real'. We looked at the number of courses being taken by learners in schools and found that of the 206 schools meeting their banding offer requirement, 189 schools (92%) have had learner take-up of at least the minimum number of courses.

2.33 These take-up results are very positive and show that there is learner demand for a wider profile of courses. A challenge facing curriculum planners will be to ensure that learners desire the additional courses that are brought on to the curriculum over the coming two-to-three years. This may require research on learner demand locally to identify their curriculum preferences.

Example: The Wrexham 14-19 Network was recognised in the Estyn inspection as having researched and provided extra courses in line with demand. However, schools continued to plan their Key Stage 4 curriculum independently without full and sufficient regard to what was available in other settings within the Network: "Not all learners in the different schools have equal opportunities to follow the pathways that are best suited to their needs."

Views on Take-up

2.34 There is evidence that, in most areas where Network coordinators expressed a view, the expanded choice is leading to higher take-up (**Table 2.4 and Table 2.5**). Network coordinators also reported that students are also more open to different options than they were previously as a wider number of courses had been taken up by learners.

Table 2.4: 'To what extent would you agree or disagree that any changes to the offer will lead to increased take-up of the collaborative offer?'	
Strongly Agree	2
Agree	9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	6
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	0
Don't Know	1

Table 2.5: 'To what extent would you agree or disagree that learners are more open to different options than two years ago?'	
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	15
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	0
Don't Know	0

2.35 Some respondents were unsure whether a widened curriculum offer would lead to similarly wide course take-up. There was a view that while more courses may be on offer, learners may not be interested in some of the additions, or may be put off taking those options by a variety of factors.

2.36 It would be possible, for example, for a school to include a long list of vocational courses under one option column and none elsewhere within its menu. In doing this, the school would have increased the range of subjects apparently on offer, but individual pupils would, in reality, only be able to choose to study one of them.

2.37 One of the schools we consulted has seen the curriculum offer widen significantly at the same time as they have reduced the number of courses they offer to learners in-house. However, the increased offer can require students to compromise on their preferred subject choices at times.

"There is now a much wider choice of subjects and combinations for young people. We now have the Welsh Bac at Level 3 on offer, which we couldn't have done before. Working together has solved some of our staffing problems; we've been able to rationalise and decide not to run some courses... We have more viable class sizes." (11-18 School Head)

"Our system allows choice for pupils within the blocks they are choosing. It can be restrictive in some ways. For example, if there is one option you really want to do then you have to take one of the other options in that block – which might not actually interest you. So there is a bit of a dilemma there." (11-18 School Head)

2.38 There was also a view that by changing the curriculum offered by the home school in KS4 or KS5, there was an indirect impact throughout the school. One school reported their concerns about removing some staff from their school as it sends out a message to the whole school about the focus on those subject areas. For example, if a school decides that they do not need a Geography teacher, because another provider is delivering the A-Level Geography course, there are implications further down the school for learners in KS3. The message is sent out that Geography is not a priority subject at the school, so learners are less interested in it and do not choose it when they get to KS4/5.

An 'Illusory Offer'?

2.39 Schools in one area reported a concern that their offer to students may be 'illusory'. Schools are limited to a set number of places on each of the courses offered by the local college. Two schools reported that pupil demand had exceeded the number of places that their school had been allocated at the college. Therefore, the schools had to 'put pupils' names into a hat' in order to decide who could take up the opportunities.

2.40 One school had been allocated three spaces on an Engineering course, however, 15 pupils at the school wanted to take the course. The school decided to deliver the course itself, rather than let down their learners, however, the Network Coordinator expressed concerns about the quality and sustainability of the course that would be delivered.

2.41 Similarly, schools have had to remove some choices from particular columns in order to accommodate new subjects. This has led to more traditional subjects appearing in only one column within a school's subject menu (where they had previously appeared in two), which means that the school still offers the same range of subjects, but pupils do not have the same opportunity to combine particular subjects with others.

2.42 Indeed, some contributors feared that the drive to widen curriculum choice may, rather perversely, actually lead to fewer courses running. It was argued that extending curriculum choice could render some subjects unviable, even when delivered on a collaborative basis.

> *"You have more courses … but fewer children on each course … especially with current demographic patterns … which means that they won't be sustainable in the long run."* (School Headteacher)

Curriculum Offer Case Study

2.43 We have included some case study examples throughout this report. The case studies provide the context within which providers are operating and learners are going about their studies. The case studies are designed to provide further illustration to the general points being made and to help the reader understand how the Measure is being delivered in practice.

2.44 The first case study describes the KS4 and KS5 vocational curriculum offer in one area. Offsite, vocational provision is delivered on one full day each week. Interestingly, although learners have a wide choice of vocational courses available, the full range of courses have not been taken up.

2.45 KS5 provision has developed along similar lines to KS4, with the majority of offsite provision delivered on one whole day though with some (limited) use of video-conferencing also as an alternative to students having to travel over quite long distances.

Case Study Area Vocational Offsite KS4 Provision

All schools currently meet the Measure in Key Stage 4 and are also likely to do so over the next two years – *"we've made huge steps forward."*

The widened curriculum offer resulted principally from an effective programme of collaboration between ten of the schools and the only college in the area to offer a range of vocational options (the "Futures Programme"). It is offered on the basis of a one-day a week, whole-day programme undertaken at the college.

In the current year, subjects include Hair and Beauty, Construction, and Motor Vehicle Level 2 courses. The college had also offered other courses, notably Land Based and Catering; however, there had been insufficient demand for these. Pupils are 'bussed in' using a network of college bus services and local buses (topped up where necessary by taxis).

The long journey times to the college meant that concentrating provision in one day was the most effective way of implementing the curriculum offer. For example, pupils from one school had a journey of one hour and 15 minutes in each direction.

One additional 'standalone' group of students from one school undertook a Construction course on the basis of one 'long half-day' per week (i.e. afternoon until 5pm which was considerably longer than the school day). They receive additional self-supported study at the school using the college's moodle.

In total, across the two years (year 10 and year 11) there are now some 250 pupils participating in this offsite programme, representing around 10% of pupils within the relevant years at participating schools.

Case Study Area Vocational Offsite KS5 Provision

There are two main models of KS5 delivery in use. The first involves joint provision between the college and a small number of schools, to offer a range of BTEC National Award options alongside AS Levels. These courses were again delivered

on the basis of a one day per week attendance at college.

Offering courses on a full day per week basis meant that it was possible to integrate a school learner into a group of full time college students. School pupils were then able to choose from the following subjects:

- Performing Arts (Dance or Musical Theatre);
- Business Studies;
- Health and Social Care;
- Sport;
- Media Production (Interactive media);
- Art and Design;
- Hospitality;
- Travel and Tourism;
- IT Practitioners.

Initial results of the school-based students were very good. From a participating school's perspective, offering additional options was key to a strategy of retaining more of its learners into the sixth form, a strategy which seemed to be working. The current Year 12 is far larger than any previous year with some 44 students (out of 99 year 11s last year). Moreover, because the National Awards are two-year courses, enrolment on them is an aid to student retention.

A second initiative was the offer of additional AS and A level qualifications using video-conferencing from a commercial provider. Video-conferencing was enabling a number of schools to access subjects such as Law, Sociology and Psychology. Students received only one one-hour tutorial per week (plus two face-to-face visits per year and additional tutor support via e-mail).

Results for the first year of AS levels were said to be very good, despite some concerns about the low intensity of the teaching. Two focus group students were following at least one of these courses and gave very positive feedback. For one of them, the fact that Law had been offered was a key factor in her decision to stay on at school, rather than to go to a Sixth Form college elsewhere.

Vocational vs Academic Qualifications

2.46 There is no consensus among network coordinators on the impact that the Measure would have on the perception of Vocational Qualifications (**Table 2.6**).

Table 2.6: 'To what extent would you agree or disagree that the Measure will lead to parity of esteem across vocational and academic provision?'	
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	5
Neither Agree nor Disagree	7
Disagree	6
Strongly Disagree	1
Don't Know	0

Source: YCL Survey of Network Coordinators

2.47 None of the coordinators mentioned learners in their responses to this question. Instead, parents' perceptions were consistently noted. Therefore, future policy may need to focus on Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) that includes explaining the benefits of Vocational Qualifications to parents and, possibly, Higher Education Institutions.

> *"The argument will be won not by the Measure but by having qualifications that are deemed acceptable and have a wide currency especially into the HE sector with the latter's endorsement. An example would be the new level 3 Principal Learning Qualifications from the English Diplomas that are now coming into Wales under the banner of the Welsh Baccalaureate."* (Network Coordinator)

> *"Pre-16 vocational qualifications, equivalent to two GCSEs, are often delivered in the same curriculum time as that allocated to a single GCSE. Therefore, it is difficult to argue parity of esteem. Post 16 the parity in terms of UCAS points goes someway to addressing the issue. However, until parents and Higher Education Institutions are brought on board the issue of parity of esteem will not be resolved."* (Network Coordinator)

> *"Parity of esteem depends upon the wider recognition in society as a whole that vocational and academic routes are both of value for young people. This will not be achieved by legislation alone."* (Network Coordinator)

> *"There would only be true parity of esteem if all courses were simply called 'courses' and had no further qualifying title like vocational/applied/academic/general."* (Network Coordinator)

2.48 One coordinator felt that given time it is "*inevitable*" that perceptions of vocational provision will change.

> *"…as courses become more established the parents who view vocational elements as less worthy may see things differently - not that schools have failed to sell vocational course up to now but some parents [are] difficult to persuade."* (Network Coordinator)

2.49 Pupils themselves did not really differentiate between academic and vocational courses, they were simply different options on the menu to them. The reasons given by pupils for opting for vocational courses included:

- the opportunity to undertake practical work as part of the course;
- the opportunity to participate in activities that they enjoy;
- the opportunity to go outside school to do courses;
- a perception is that the qualifications to which courses led would be useful – " *construction … it's like four GCSEs*";
- the courses on offer being relevant to individuals' career aspirations - *"I want to be a marine engineer"*, *"I want to be a fashion designer"* and *"I want to do drama"*;
- a perception that the course would help individuals *"get a better job in the future"*;
- an opportunity to be outdoors.

Nature of the Measure

2.50 Some providers noted concerns that the Measure's focus on Level 2 qualifications may result in the volume of Level 1 provision being reduced. Level 1 vocational provision is considered to be particularly important to engage potentially disaffected young people throughout KS4 and in the drive to reduce the number of NEET young people. Some schools stated that in the event that they can only afford one type of provision, courses at Level 1 may be more important to preserve.

2.51 The Measure itself could lead to more 'generalist' teachers being employed, instead of subject specialists. Increasing the breadth of the curriculum may well lead to more practitioners having to teach across multiple subject areas, rather than just their specialism. There may be an impact on the quality of teaching as a result of this generalisation. For instance, in one example that we are aware of a Spanish teacher who studied economics at university became the school's Economics teacher too when they discovered his wider skills. This could also highlight a potential under-utilisation among teachers.

Diversity between Schools

2.52 Some consultees felt that the 'one size fits all' nature of the Measure does not take into account the diversity that exists both across different local authority areas and within those areas. For example, particular representations were made regarding the:

- size of schools;
- rurality;
- pre-existing curriculum provision; and
- faith schools.

2.53 By way of example, a faith school felt that not enough account had been taken of the status of faith school provision. Parents send their pupils to faith schools because they want to retain the faith-based context in their child's learning. Most authorities do not have a range of faith-based schools available who can collaborate together and pupils would have to go to non-faith schools for significant amounts of time, which may be a problem for some individuals.

"Collaboration can dilute t h e faith education that parents expected their children to have. It's about the ethos or culture of the school. There should be special consideration for faith schools as there is for Welsh medium schools." (Faith School Head)

3 COLLABORATIVE WORKING

3.1 There has been an improvement in the level of collaborative working between providers over the last two years, and there is scope for this to improve further.

3.2 Providers have started to see the benefits of partnership working as the curriculum offer has widened and the relationship between partnering organisations has improved through mutual trust and understanding.

3.3 Nevertheless, some significant challenges still exist. There remain some schools – particularly those with high achievement rates - who have not fully engaged with the partnership working ethos, possibly because they have not offered vocational courses in the past or they want to maintain the quality of their existing provision.

3.4 Other challenges include the resource implications and logistics of working together. These challenges and others are discussed further in later sections.

3.5 This section reports on the changes that have occurred in collaborative working over recent years, some of the benefits that have arisen as a result of partnership working and the barriers that limit it.

Recent Changes in Collaborative Working

3.6 Network coordinators reported a general improvement in partnership working over the last two years. All coordinators now categorise their partnership working as at least 'good, with most providers involved across limited subject areas' (**Table 3.1**).

3.7 A slight majority (11 out of 20 respondents to the survey of coordinators) said that partnership working in their areas had improved since the Measure was first discussed. Of these 11, two respondents recorded a significant improvement, i.e. an improvement of two or more categories (**Table 3.1**).

Table 3.1: Partnership Working		
	How would you categorise partnership working between providers in your area **two years ago** before the L&S Measure was discussed?	How would you categorise partnership working between providers in your area **at this moment in time**?

Excellent All providers involved in a well coordinated system	1	5
Very good Most providers involved in a variety of subject areas	7	9
Good Most providers involved across limited subject areas	8	6
Limited A minority of providers involved	4	0
Non-existent	0	0

Source: YCL Survey of Network Coordinators

3.8 The Measure was explicitly stated as a key driver of change by 12 respondents (**Table 3.2**). Other reasons given included *"trust"* or *"improved* collaboration.*"*

> *"I…have found the partnership incredibly strong from the day I started in post. The Learning and Skills Measure has crystallised the direction in which the Partnership needs to travel."* (Network Coordinator)

3.9 However, the Measure was not universally regarded as the catalyst for change in partnership working.

> *"(the Measure)… has had no perceptible effect on the quality of partnership working in the area." (Network Coordinator)*

Table 3.2: 'What have been the key reasons for any change in partnership working over the past two years?'	
The Measure	12
Trust/collaboration	8
Funding	5
The Transformation agenda	4
Budget situations: e.g. falling rolls/public sector funding	2
Appointment of a full time network coordinator	1
Finding appropriate access for welsh medium students	1
Development of a central venue for collaborative delivery	1

Source: YCL Survey of Network Coordinators

3.10 To a large extent, the impact that the Measure could have on collaborative working is dependent upon the arrangements that existed previously. In some areas, collaborative arrangements were well established prior to the Measure, whereas in others the Measure acted as a major spur to encourage the formation of cluster groups and formal partnership arrangements.

> *"Historically, educational providers in* [name removed] *have worked very independently due to the sparsity and rurality of the area. Whilst there have been small pockets of competition in general this has not been as evident a problem as it is in many urban areas and there has been no pre-established cluster working. There has been a verbal understanding that schools would operate an academic curriculum post 16 and the college would offer the vocational curriculum - until recently there has been little or no mixing of the two."* (Network Coordinator)

Scope for Further Improvement

3.11 While there have been improvements in collaborative working arrangements over the past two years, 19 of the 20 network coordinators who responded to the survey agreed that provider collaboration can further improve (**Table 3.3**).

Table 3.3: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that provider collaboration can further improve in your Network area?'	
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	14
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	1
Don't Know	0

Source: YCL Survey of Network Coordinators

3.12 On the whole, this was a very strong response from Network Coordinators. There is clearly a perception that each of the Networks have some way to go to achieve the maximum they can from partnership working.

3.13 This is to be expected. Many of the local Networks and cluster groups have only recently been put in place; therefore they cannot be expected to have solved all local challenges immediately. In addition, the increasing banding requirements (as discussed in Section 2) will require partnerships to work together and offer a wider range of courses to meet the 2012 target.

> *"...the Measure has kick started collaboration and has moved some schools forward who would have previously not done so. But it will still take a little longer to achieve the offer aspired to in the 14-19 policy."* (School Headteacher)

3.14 Coordinators may also be reflecting the view that, although most providers are now well engaged in collaborative working, there remain some who have not yet engaged fully. While these providers are in the minority, they may in fact be the most difficult group to include: 'late adopters' are likely to require the most convincing as to the benefits of partnership working or may face the greatest barriers to deliver collaborative provision.

3.15 In a small number of cases, schools do not appear to be participating in collaborative work and, instead, prefer to install their own vocational facilities, which may place them in competition, rather than collaboration, with their local partners.

Strength of the Local Network

3.16 The strength of different area partnerships and networks affects the collaboration between members of the group. Some local networks did not have the strength to be able to encourage schools to participate in the partnership working or to top-slice the schools budget as it is 'too controversial' to implement.

3.17 Local authorities taking a leadership role in collaborative working is regarded as a critical success factor. For example, in Wrexham the Network strategic group contains the local authorities Chief Learning and Achievement Officer and has been integrated with the former CCET[8].

<u>Headteacher Engagement</u>

---

[8] Community Consortium for Education and Training

3.18 Securing the buy-in of Headteachers to collaborative working is critically important to ensure its long-term viability. Changing the culture of some schools by demonstrating the positive impact of partnership working will be required to gain their full commitment.

3.19 In two areas visited as part of the case study fieldwork, the impact of new Headteachers was highlighted as an important factor in encouraging partnership working.

3.20 The LEA officers in one area pointed to the fact that of the eight secondary schools in the county, five had appointed new heads in the last four years. The influence of the 'new' heads had been a *'significant contributory element'* to the progress made in partnership working over the last few years.

> *"We've had five new heads in the last four years and that's been significant factor in changing the ethos of collective partnership working. There has been a change but still a long way to go."* (Network Coordinator)

3.21 While two secondary schools in the area had recently begun participating in collaborative provision (since the introduction of the Measure), arrangements were at a much earlier stage than with other schools locally. As such, staff within these two schools were sceptical about the value of collaboration and concerns remained that the collaborative agenda could lead to losing post-16 students to the local college.

Implementing Binding Agreements

3.22 Some areas that we visited had no formal binding arrangements between providers regarding their collaborative provision. Binding arrangements commit providers to participating in collaborative provision and, importantly, make it very difficult for providers to renege on their collaborative commitments.

Positive Impact of Collaborative Working

3.23 The potential benefits of collaborative working, such as efficiency gains and an enhanced curriculum offer, are discussed in detail in Section 4 and 2, respectively.

Relationship between Schools and Colleges

3.24 In each of the areas we visited, we found that the relationship between schools and colleges has improved over the past two to three years. The relationship has moved from one of mistrust and regarding each other as competitors towards a relationship of mutual support.

> *"We now have a completely different relationship with the schools. We have been in competition previously with the school 6th Forms especially, but that has really changed now."* (College 14-19 Coordinator)

> *"The number of young people coming to us has grown year on year as the partnership has developed. We received 87 students in 2006 and 260 in 2007."* (College 14-19 Coordinator)

3.25 Improved collaborative working through the network has resulted in the colleges receiving much better information about the pupils they are receiving. In one area they have developed a 'Learner Transition Passport', which includes details of each young person's achievements, behavioural record and key skills attainment. This system is much more 'transparent' than it was previously, colleges are pleased as they now know who they have coming to them, whereas that was not the case previously.

3.26 In one area the local college has not hitherto collaborated with schools in the delivery of post-16 provision, reflecting sensitivity about the future of school sixth forms. The college is now involved in *"curriculum planning"* discussions with schools for the first time, brought about by the Learning and Skills Measure.   These discussions are focused entirely on vocational provision in disciplines such as Engineering, Construction and Catering, which potentially provide a degree of progression from local 14-16 vocational provision.

> *"This dialogue between the college and the schools would not have happened two years ago but engagement over 14-16 provision has enabled the college to win schools' trust and the wider dialogue to be had."* (LEA School Coordinator)

3.27 The college's attitude had changed too, and it had become far more willing to engage with schools, recognising that it is in its interest to do so because it could 'influence the quality of what comes out' of schools onto their vocational courses.

3.28 Contributors from another area noted that their initial attempts to offer vocational courses had struggled because college staff initially overestimated the likely standard of pupils beginning the courses.

> *"The college expected pupils to be working at Level 2, and it took some time for them to realise it was our* [all collaborating 14-16 providers, rather than schools alone] *job to get them to Level 2"* (School Headteacher)

3.29 In this area, the initial aim had been to develop pupils to the level of First Diploma – equivalent to four A*–C GCSEs. However, this proved to be overambitious. The curriculum now aims to reach First Certificate (equivalent to two A* - C GCSEs) in place of two GCSE options in the school setting. The college also started offering Level 1 qualifications as a fall back given that there was no equivalent in the vocational qualifications of GCSE Grades D–G.

3.30 The college has been pleasantly surprised that the schools have not simply tried to market the courses to low-attaining pupils. This is an important precursor to trusting relationships between colleges and schools, particularly in areas where schools have used 14-16 college provision as a 'dumping ground' in the past.

Barriers to Partnership Working

3.31 Network coordinators reported that some major barriers exist to collaboration in some areas. The main barriers to a successful collaborative offer mentioned throughout the survey of Network Coordinators were:

- transport/travel (mentioned by all 20 respondents);
- rurality/geography of the area (13 respondents mention this explicitly);
- timetable alignment (13 respondents mention this explicitly);
- questions over sustainability (16 respondents mention this explicitly), particularly post-ANDP funding;

- mindset/culture (16 respondents mention this explicitly), particularly of parents but also of staff and governing bodies of providers.

3.32 The next four sections of this report describe the barriers that are faced in different areas and some of the solutions that have been developed to overcome them. The next four sections illustrate the:

- **resource implications** of collaborative working, examining both the efficiency gains that have occurred and the additional costs faced by partnerships;

- **Welsh medium** specific issues that are present, which are often magnified by the rural nature of many schools;

- **logistical** barriers that have to be overcome, particularly around timetabling, transport; rural delivery and the nature of the Measure;

- provision that has been made for **learner support**.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The research consistently found that providers were very concerned about the cost implications of partnership working and of meeting the requirements of the Measure.

4.2 Some efficiency gains have been found already, including reduced duplication of courses. However, there have also been very significant collaboration costs that have arisen partly through the nature of vocational provision and the cost of transport.

4.3 Furthermore, while some areas report that they have found cost savings by eliminating small class sizes, other areas have found the converse. Costs have increased because of an increase in the number of small class sizes as a result of the vocational offer they have in place.

4.4 This section reports on the efficiencies that have been found so far in the development of partnership activities, and the additional costs associated with collaborative working that providers have encountered. We also include examples of some of the different funding models that are being used in different areas and discuss the sustainability of current funding models.

Efficiency Gains through Partnership Working

4.5 Collaborative working is stimulating improvements in efficiency, according to 14 of 20 network coordinators (one agreed strongly). Economies of scale have occurred as a result of less duplication of resources. Resources have not been duplicated to the same extent as before and there is also an expanded choice for learners (**Table 4.1**).

Table 4.1: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that co-operation and joint working amongst providers are stimulating improvements in efficiency (in terms of costs, resources)?'	
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	13
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1
Disagree	5
Strongly Disagree	0
Don't Know	0

Source: YCL Survey of Network Coordinators

4.6 Rural areas were more likely to say that joint working had not yet stimulated improvements in efficiency. Each of the five who disagreed with the above statement were in the upper 50% of the most rural local authority areas.

4.7 Potential cost savings from collaboration could be significant. Two areas particularly noted the savings that would be made in KS5 provision. In one area, savings are expected of up to half a million pounds over the coming years, while the other has started to see cost savings already as a result of increased class sizes.

> *"Over the next few years we can anticipate savings in the order of £500,000 per year as a result of the collaboration and partnership that will be developed under the Transformation strategy."* (Network Coordinator)
>
> *"Savings in AS provision alone amount to at least £150,000 this year after transport costs are accounted for. Numbers per set are two to three times what they were."* (Network Coordinator)

4.8 Areas that said that they benefit from the cost savings tended to be the most densely populated/urban areas. However, further research may be required to understand the extent and nature of these savings.

Reduced Duplication

4.9 Efficiency gains can be found through removing the duplication of courses between partnering providers. One school referred to this process as *'subject collapsing'*: where the number of learners were too low in one school, they would *'collapse'* into one group across two schools via collaboration.

Post-16 Collaboration

4.10 The model used to deliver the KS5 curriculum was realising some 'modest' cost savings in one area. However, when the 'hidden' costs of transport were included, it was thought that the provision would actually become more expensive.

4.11 In the model used, school based pupils joined an existing class of post-16 learners at the college. The college would have delivered the course without the additional school-based learners, therefore, the marginal costs per learner were very small. Schools were charged £5 per hour per student for the course and were potentially able to redirect their own resources.

4.12 In another area, collaborative activity post-16 has led to some cost savings. It has removed duplication and has reduced or eliminated the need for small group sizes.

> *"Collaborative working has additional costs associated with it, such as transport, but the value for money is better. The quality of learning is better, although it might not be cheaper per se."*
> (Head of 14-19 Development)

Additional Costs Associated with Collaborative Working

4.13 Providers highlighted specific areas where they felt that the costs of providing a wider curriculum were greater. Providers reported that vocational courses are more expensive to deliver and indirectly increase the costs of home school provision. Offsite provision requires significant transport costs; while vocational provision in general requires smaller group sizes and greater resource inputs.

Transport Costs

4.14 Transport costs are widely regarded as being high and may be unsustainable given expected budget cut-backs in the future. For example, some areas are currently using the ANDP to subsidise the costs of transport. There is a significant concern regarding how transport will be funded when ANDP funding ends.

4.15 One urban area has transport costs of £60,000 per year, which represents a significant saving (of £120,000) following a change in strategy to use public transport.

4.16 Transport costs were highlighted by a number of partnerships as being a particular drain on resources.

> *"Although joint working has facilitated access to a wider range of options for young people the cost of the provision itself, transport and staff time to coordinate the provision have not resulted in cost savings."* (Network Coordinator)
>
> *"[There is]... no evidence base to suggest that co-operation results in greater efficiencies; transport costs escalate."* (Network Coordinator)

4.17 Transport costs and logistics are discussed further in Section 6.

Small Group Sizes

4.18 In one area, the colleges said that their costs of delivering the same courses are 'roughly double' that of schools. The additional costs are caused by the higher capital input (for specialist facilities) and the smaller class sizes that colleges tend to have (college class sizes are reported to be around half the size of school class sizes). Despite this, colleges said they would prefer to have smaller class sizes than they do at present due to the nature of the students they receive; however, the costs of doing so would be too great.

> *"We would like to make class sizes smaller; we've got about 15 in each class at the moment, which is actually too many for the type of pupils we are getting from schools. If the schools sent their Level 2 pupils to us they would be losing out on income."* (FEC Representative)

4.19 Schools also felt that their costs were increased by running classes with smaller pupil numbers. For example, one class may have reduced from 16 to 12 pupils as some had chosen alternative provision at another local provider. The school would lose some funding for the four pupils who attended the other provider but their costs remained approximately the same as they still had a class to run for 12 pupils.

Offsite/Vocational Provision

4.20 The materials required for vocational provision also tend to be more expensive than for 'general' qualifications. For example, courses in Catering require a significant amount of materials to be provided, which are expensive.

4.21 School facilities cannot be easily substituted between different types of provision. Classrooms which normally hold thirty students in which they teach Geography or History are not suited to delivering vocational qualifications, such as catering, even for groups as small as twelve pupils. Therefore there is no perfect substitution between facilities and cost savings have not occurred as readily as might have been expected.

Funding Models

4.22 The models used to fund collaborative provision vary from area to area. Some have adopted a centralised approach where funding is held centrally by the Local Authority (LA), whereas others have relied upon a more devolved funding model, where funding follows individual learners (but is supplemented by the central resources). Through case study visits the research identified evidence of characteristics, which enable us to describe three different potential models.

4.23 In the centralised funding model the LA holds money centrally and distribute to providers based upon the courses they offer or the number of learners they have received. This model can incentivise providers to participate in collaborative provision as the costs of offsite provision have already been paid for; the marginal cost to the school is effectively zero. In addition, by holding funds centrally, the LA can fund the costs of quality assuring provision, transporting pupils or training Learning Coaches.

4.24 In contrast, the devolved model means that schools contribute based on the number of learners that they have attending collaborative provision. If a school has few students attending collaborative provision, they will also retain more funds for use at their own discretion. Schools who are considerable users of collaborative provision will pay more, and thus will have reduced funds for other purposes.

4.25 We have provided examples of the funding models used in three different areas for illustrative purposes. The models have each been developed to meet local needs, and as such, are considered to be the best fit for each local area.

Offsite Funding Formula - A

4.26 Funding follows the learner in this model of funding KS4 delivery. Funding is transferred to the 'host' provider from the 'home' provider on a per learner basis.

4.27 Based on PLASC returns the cost per learner is broken down on a course by course basis. 80% of the Area Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) value is transferred with the learner and 20% stays with the home school. The 20% retained by the home school includes the deprivation weighting the school receives and is used to fund IAG and exam entry fees. The qualifications gained by learners are credited to the host school.

4.28 There was general acceptance of the formula after some initial reluctance from providers. No one knows what the exact figure should be to fund offsite provision, but 80/20 seems to be the 'industry standard'. The LA provided some worked examples for people and have found that providers are content to proceed with the system as it is working. There is no subsidy for post-16 courses all funding comes from the post-16 grant providers receive.

Offsite Funding Model - B

4.29 This is an example of a centralised approach, where funding is held centrally to pay for offsite provision at the local colleges. The funding mechanism for KS4 provision is subsidised by the local Network, with the bulk of the contributions coming from schools.

4.30 On the whole, it was thought that collaboration increases rather than reduces costs insomuch as it generally means transporting pupils from one site to another or investing in expensive technological solutions. However, collaboration does enable finite resources to be stretched further and this means that provision which might otherwise be unviable can be afforded.

4.31 The Network meets in full the costs of 'block' courses delivered by the two colleges at their sites, regardless of how many pupils choose to take up the opportunities. This fixed price approach was adopted (rather than paying a fee per participating pupil) in order to safeguard colleges against the risk of failing to attract sufficient numbers of pupils to render courses viable. On average, year-long block courses cost colleges some £6,500 to run with additional transport costs of around £3,500.

4.32 The network subsidises school to school provision by providing one-third of the funds required. The remaining two-thirds of the costs are borne by schools. The Network has reduced its contributions towards these costs over time to convey the message to schools that the courses should be funded from mainstream budgets from 2013. Network funding was reduced from 50% on 2008 to 33% in 2009.

4.33 The Network sets aside some £250k to £300k from its annual budget to support collaborative provision. The costs of transporting learners between sites ranged from £5k to £18k per school last year.

Offsite Funding Model - C

4.34 School budgets are top-sliced to provide the partnership with funding to subsidise offsite provision. Funding is then shared among the different local consortia within the area, based upon the level of need in each area (this funding model is going to be reviewed in the near future).

4.35 Where learners go offsite, funding follows the learners to compensate the host school. 60% of the cost of a course is funded by the partnership, the remaining 40% is funded by the school directly. Top-slicing budgets gives the schools some incentive to use the collaborative provision.

4.36 One school said that they have not seen any cost savings from collaborative working in pre-16 education as yet, and have instead found it to be a cost.

> *"Cost savings will only occur where schools had previously been running inefficient class sizes. I don't think that many of us have been doing that anyway so I don't know where the savings will come from."* (School Head)

4.37 However, another school said that there may be some cost savings in A Level provision. Where learners tend to drop-out in Y13, they are able to maintain viable groups through collaboration.

Sustainability

4.38 Our research did not set out specifically to undertake a costing analysis of the implementation of the Measure. However, it is clear that many providers have made considerable progress to meeting the requirements of the Measure through access to the additional ANDP funding. This relatively small pot of funding[9] appears to have contributed to improved value for money in the sector as many learners are now able to access a significantly wider choice of courses.

4.39 Our research found that, in most cases, ANDP funding was being used as an additional revenue stream to help fund courses, as well as to build sustained capacity in the sector. Therefore there is a real concern that if the additional funding is removed, the curriculum offer will reduce in many areas. We would not expect the recently added provision to be lost completely, as some efficiency gains have been found, however, providers consistently reported that they would struggle to maintain the current provision without the additional funding through the ANDP.

4.40 In one local partnership area, consultees said that the overall net cost implications had definitely been a *"cost increase".* Those additional costs are currently being met by grants from the 14-19 Network. However, the use of the ANDP budget for this purpose raised questions of sustainability. The Network Coordinator suggested that technically, Headteachers could *"opt out on grounds of cost"* and went so far as to say that *"when the grant finishes – I suspect they will exercise that opt out clause".*

---

[9] The total ANDP funding granted in 2009/10 was £20m.

Views on Sustainability

4.41 Views on the sustainability of partnership working were dependent on how consultees defined it. Collaborative working was considered more sustainable at current levels of funding than it will be in future years, when budgets reduce and the ANDP funding is no longer being received.

4.42 Alternatively, consultees said that the collaborative working to meet the Measure could be sustained, however, that might be at the expense of other provision – such as Level 1 KS4 provision - which is considered to be important to prevent an increase in NEET young people.

Case Study – Funding Model Used, School to College KS4 Provision

KS4 provision within the college is met to about 50% by ANDP funding. The balance is then split between participating schools on an equal basis (not per learner). The Network Coordinator believed that this was not the case in other LEAs but was an important signal to ensure collaboration from all schools. The college charges £47.50 per hour per group.

The ANDPs contribution to the cost of these initiatives is around £125,000 for tuition costs and an additional £43,000 to cover transport costs. In line with this, school contributions were said to be around £15,000 each from their delegated budget. The schools were able to make some offsetting savings by reducing the number of GCSE classes. However, it was thought that these cost savings were highly unlikely to equal the financial contribution which they had made.

Use of ANDP Funding

4.43 The ANDP funding has been used in a variety of ways by different LAs. Some have used the ANDP to support the development of specific courses, others have used the funding to subsidise all offsite provision, while other areas have used the ANDP to cover the costs of transport.

> *"The progress we have made in widening the curriculum would have been impossible without the carrot of the ANDP funding."*
> (Network Coordinator)

4.44 An example comes from one area where the costs of 14-16 college link courses are subsidised by the LA. Schools could not fund the cost of the courses themselves as it would be roughly double the AWPU that they receive. The subsidy is paid through the ANDP.

> *"Schools don't make enough cost savings at the moment to be able to pay the full cost of college courses. That may change over the long-term."* (Head of 14-19 Development)

4.45 One area reported a concern regarding the use of ANDP funding. They felt that it may be being used to support 'new' programmes of learning for two year periods, then re-packaged/re-named to enable continued funding. In some situations this may be entirely appropriate as different combinations and approaches are tried out; however, there is a sense that it masks the requirement for sustainability.

> *"ANDP money is perceived as part of the mix of funding delivery rather than merely supporting 'innovative developments'."* (Network Coordinator)

4.46 Some network coordinators reported that ANDP funding has been used to plug funding gaps. Some respondents expressed a desire for information on funding post-2013 (i.e. post-ANDP). Without a clear indication of the future funding available, the sustainability of the offer may be compromised.

4.47 Further research would be required to understand how ANDP funding has been used and what impact there will be when the funding ceases.

Future ANDP Funding

4.48 Future rounds of ANDP may be subsumed within wider Local Authority education budgets, rather than being provided as additional, 'hypothecated' funding streams. This potential approach would bring with it a number of benefits and drawbacks, including:

- ANDP funding is linked specifically to the three-year strategic plan developed by the LA. Removing the link between the ANDP and subsequent funding could reduce the focus on achieving the stated aims of the ANDP;

- by providing a specific funding stream that is solely to be used for the purposes of meeting the aims of the ANDP, WAG are implicitly communicating the importance that they attach to the funding stream. Removing the hypothecated funding stream could imply that the ANDP is less of a priority;

- on the plus side, the 'ring-fenced' nature of budgets can act as a constraint to some LAs who may feel that they could make more efficient use of the funding in a different area, which they consider to be a greater priority. Alternatively, removing the 'ring-fenced' nature of funding may enable LAs to combine it with other funding streams to greater overall effect.

5 WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION

5.1 In the main, provision at Welsh medium schools is affected by the Measure in the same way as all schools across Wales; however some of the issues are writ larger as a result of the isolated location of many Welsh medium schools.

5.2 Our research found examples of long-standing collaborative arrangements among Welsh medium schools and, at the other extreme, of schools which had been prompted into collaborative working only as a result of the Measure.

5.3 We found that Welsh medium schools tended to be more innovative in the solutions they identified, perhaps as a result of their more isolated, rural location. Welsh medium schools tended to be making more use of peripatetic teachers; cross-border collaboration and of ICT facilities, such as video conferencing.

5.4 This section discusses the Welsh medium specific issues that were found through the research, in particular:

- changes in provision over recent years;
- learner demand;
- recruiting staff; and
- vocational assessments.

Changes in Welsh Medium Provision

5.5 Recent developments in the provision of courses in the medium of Welsh have occurred in the wake of Welsh language related legislation and in anticipation of WAG's Welsh Medium Education Strategy (WMES). Increasing opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh under the 14-19 Learning Pathways is a strategic objective of the WMES.

5.6 Our survey of network coordinators found that Welsh medium provision had increased in 19 out of 20 areas at least to a limited extent (**Table 5.1**). Three respondents reported that this increase was at least in part achieved due to cross-border provision.

Table 5.1: 'In your area, has the range of Welsh medium/bilingual provision increased over the past two years?'	
Yes	10
To a Limited Extent	9
No	1
Don't Know	0

Source: YCL Survey of Network Coordinators

5.7 Some respondents noted that the lower demand for Welsh medium provision in their areas resulted in diseconomies of scale, which provided a barrier to further expansion. Diseconomies of scale have also occurred because of the under-supply of teachers and providers willing and able to provide offers in the Welsh medium.

> *"Major barriers include the availability of Welsh speaking teachers/lecturers, in particular with suitable vocational skills, the cost of small group sizes and the geographical isolation of some Welsh medium schools."* (Network Coordinator)
>
> *"New provision only attracts small numbers of learners, and would be considered not viable in the English medium sector."* (Network Coordinator)

Influence of the Measure

5.8 In general, Network Coordinators felt that the increase in Welsh medium provision was, at least in part, a result of the Measure (**Table 5.2**). The Measure provided additional momentum to hasten changes to the Welsh medium provision in some areas and it was regarded as a necessary driver of change. However, others reported that changes in their area pre-dated the Measure, suggesting it had little impact.

> *"The wish to widen the range of courses available was already there and the Welsh medium school met the requirements of the Measure with our band C placement. However, the Measure will prompt further development to reach the eventual 30 course target."* (Network Coordinator)

"This was changing anyway- it has supported the growth. A mature debate is required in WAG about the realistic outcome of providing 30 quality options through the medium of Welsh. Quality English medium vocational options should be included: otherwise learners are being denied educational opportunities. This has to be balanced against Welsh language options, which could be of a lower standard of quality." (Network Coordinator)

Table 5.2: 'To what extent would you agree or disagree that the Learning and Skills Measure has been responsible for widening the range of Welsh medium/bilingual provision?'	
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	7
Neither Agree nor Disagree	10
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	1
Don't Know	1

Source: YCL Survey of Network Coordinators

5.9　The mixed picture presented here reflects, at least in part, the different attitudes towards Welsh medium provision that are prevalent across different local authority areas. The case study fieldwork encountered extremes of Welsh medium provision, from very little within a LA area to widespread provision. There were examples of areas where Welsh medium collaborative working pre-dated the Measure and of others where the Measure had provided a necessary 'jolt' to improve the collaborative provision in the Welsh medium.

5.10　Interestingly, most consultees focussed on meeting the minimum requirements of the Measure, rather than on maximising the potential curriculum offer. It may be a natural consequence of establishing a minimum threshold that there is a tendency among areas to target the threshold, rather than on achieving the maximum possible.

5.11　Consultees reflected on a number of issues that were discussed with regard to Welsh medium provision, each of these are summarised below, before being discussed in more detail:

- **Learner Demand**, insufficient demand from learners for Welsh medium provision;
- **Recruiting staff** with sufficient Welsh medium skills is problematic;
- **Cross local authority border provision** is often used to overcome Welsh medium difficulties in particular; and
- the lack of Welsh medium **vocational assessments** was also discussed in some areas.

Learner Demand

5.12 Learner demand for Welsh medium provision was reported to vary by area. In some areas, all courses are offered, and taken up, on a bilingual basis, whereas in others, consultees said that Welsh medium provision had attracted very little interest from learners.

5.13 One LEA and the local college recognised that *"Welsh medium provision is a big struggle"*. Only one of the eight secondaries in the area is classed as a bilingual secondary school. The LEA said that *"huge progress"* had been made in extending the offer within this school at both pre and post 16 levels and *"a lot of the extension in post 16"* had been achieved via video conferencing.

5.14 Both the college and the LEA said that extending Welsh provision and, more specifically, increasing the demand from learners for Welsh provision was a particular challenge.

> *"There's just no critical mass. Yes there is a lack of courses but also a lack of students and up-take."* (Network Coordinator)
> *"The issue we have is that so many of the first language Welsh students say they don't want to be taught in Welsh. They tell us they don't want to be different to everyone else."* (College Representative)

Recruiting Staff

5.15 There is a severe difficulty in recruiting staff that are both able and confident enough to teach through the medium of Welsh. This was mentioned in all case study areas as a major concern.

5.16 In one area a small minority of courses – notably Hair and Beauty for the KS4 groups – are largely bilingual. This is 'largely incidental' and is a result of the language skills and commitment of the staff.

Cross-Border Collaboration

5.17 In one of the case study areas we visited there was only one Welsh medium school in the authority. The school had developed a relationship with another Welsh medium school from outside the local authority area prior to the Measure coming in to place. Their arrangement involves the sharing of staff members who travel between sites to deliver different courses. The collaboration has been very effective, with a very positive impact on the results at the school and retention.

5.18 The partnership is now in its fourth year of operation and is only viable through the added funding they receive from WAG. The school receives a contribution from the other partnership school and use funding from the current ANDP.

5.19 The partnership has enabled them to offer a wider vocational and academic curriculum.

> *"We can offer academic courses like economics, politics and psychology by sharing teachers between the schools and by combining classes."* (Welsh Medium School)

5.20 The schools share peripatetic teachers and deliver some courses using video conferencing facilities, combining classes to make viable group sizes.

> *"As a Welsh medium school we will offer classes with small group sizes if we have to, there is a duty on us to run courses. Post-16, a viable group size for us is five learners."* (Welsh Medium School Headteacher)

Vocational Assessments

5.21 In one area we visited, all courses are delivered bilingually. However, in some courses (e.g. Construction) pupils are forced to undertake their assessment in English because the on-line assessment tool is mono-lingual.

6 LOGISTICS AND OTHER FACTORS

6.1 Logistical issues, such as timetabling, transport and the rural location of some schools were often highlighted as particular barriers to collaboration. These issues are not insurmountable in themselves; however, taken together they can make collaborative working seem unachievable.

6.2 The logistical challenges faced require joint working at a local level to identify the most effective way forward and overcome the difficulties. This joint working requires strong leadership from the partnership and an innovative, 'can-do' attitude from network members.

6.3 Solutions have been found to many of the early problems identified and, given time, further solutions will be found to the remaining issues.

6.4 This section reports on the concerns that were raised through the research and some of the solutions that have been put in place to overcome them.

Timetabling

6.5 Each of the areas we visited had implemented variants of 'block timetabling' models. In these models, either one full day per week or two half day blocks were stipulated as 'collaborative provision' blocks on the timetable. In addition to the general issues in aligning timetables across schools, other issues had emerged, such as the knock-on effect on the rest of the school timetable and the need to compromise on preferred subject choices when various options cannot be taken simultaneously.

Timetable Alignment

6.6 A key challenge for all secondary schools had been to work to align timetables. This had not been an easy task by any means, with schools in the same local authority area often having quite different times for the start and finish of the school day and different numbers and lengths of periods, especially when it included an additional factor of having to bus or taxi students to other schools. Some schools reported that this made timetable alignment extremely challenging and had "repercussions" both for students involved in offsite provision and for those not involved.

"Prioritising timetable restructuring to meet the Measure might have a detrimental knock-on effect on KS3 pupils, which would be worrying, as it was widely recognised that it is at KS3 that disenchanted pupils switch off from education." (Network Coordinator)

6.7 The need for "block" timetabling was originally a major negative for schools. Block timetabling meant other subjects had to be timetabled around whole day release for a relatively small number of pupils. Joint delivery has required more double or triple lessons, which were not considered to be the optimum delivery mechanism. If a student (or teacher) misses a day through illness and misses a triple lesson, they have to do a lot of work to catch-up. However, schools and Network Coordinators said that the half-day block delivery has worked well and teachers have found that there are advantages to such intensive delivery.

6.8 Timetabling KS5 provision in full day blocks led to cost efficiencies in some areas. This model meant that it was possible to integrate school learners into groups of full-time college students on a one day a week basis. However, while this offer exists to all schools in one local area, only pupils from two schools are travelling to the college.

"Working the KS5 timetable around the college's offer for vocational provision alongside AS and A levels is a major reason why only two schools have engaged with the offer to mix school and college based provision so far." (College Assistant Principal)

6.9 In one case study area, post-16 timetabling has been centrally coordinated by the partnership. The timetable lead in the LEA is a well respected timetabler who is known across the area. He had the credibility among the schools to be able to develop the common timetable.

Timetabling Changes

6.10 Schools have had to change the way they timetable classes, introducing more split teachers for classes, for example. Some groups have three or four teachers to cover one subject for them. The use of split teachers was considered 'less than ideal'.

6.11 Other steps that schools have taken include some scrapping of courses in Year 7 (because they no longer have teachers in those subject areas), which could well have implications for Year 7 pupils' learning choices as they progress through school, and a 'massive' change in the KS3 curriculum.

6.12 One school is concerned that they are 'tying up' such a large block of the curriculum within the school for a comparatively small proportion of pupils.

> *"We have a school with 1,000 pupils. Last year the 6th Form, which has 130 pupils, dictated the curriculum for everyone else, even though there are only 5% of pupils moving site. The ideal situation would be to have super-schools, big schools that can deliver everything."* (School Headteacher)

6.13 Timetable clashes are inevitable and have the effect of limiting what courses young people are able to undertake. One example we were told of involved a group of five pupils who were interested in taking an Agriculture course at a local Welsh medium school. In practice, only three of them actually made the journey to attend the Agriculture course as it clashed with their Year 10 PE class, which they decided to attend instead.

Timetable Solutions

6.14 Innovative solutions were required to overcome some of the local logistical challenges that were presented as obstacles to collaborative working. These solutions are wide-ranging and include changing the start and finish times of the school day; 'blocking' large parts of the timetable to make lesson times longer; and increasing the use of ICT to deliver courses.

Case Study – Solutions to Logistical Problems

In one area, schools in a very rural location have found an innovative solution to their to local transport difficulties. Some examples include:

- working with a local train operator and changing both the school start times and the train times to suit the school's requirements. Pupils now start school at 8.15 and finish at 2.15pm; this unusual school timetable also enables pupils to participate in collaborative courses (Spanish and Law) led by another school at the end of the normal school day and catch a later train home;

- another school has invested in two mini-buses (thanks, in part, to donations received from local employers), which enables pupils to be transported to other schools and to college sites;

- elaborate travel arrangements have been put in place by one consortium of schools, whereby buses travel between schools, picking pupils up and transporting them to particular places for courses. This has required the careful alignment of timetables among the schools;

- local taxi firms are used extensively to transport pupils between school and school/college sites;

- one school has 'blocked' its Year 10 and 11 timetables. This has impacted upon the pattern of lessons in core subjects as well as optional ones. According to the Headteacher, this has been welcomed by pupils, to the extent that pupils in years 7-9 have also asked whether their timetables could be altered to allow longer lessons. Another unintended benefit was that the school has become *"much quieter"* as pupils spend less time moving between classrooms;

- some use is made of video-conferencing to deliver lessons e.g. Spanish and French lessons are delivered from one 'host' school to learners at other providers.

6.15 Nevertheless, there are some practical drawbacks to these solutions, which impair their effectiveness in practice.

6.16 For example, there are concerns about the health and safety implications of transporting pupils as young as 14 from one institution to another. Pupils are often obliged to wait for trains or buses, which is concerning both from a safety point of view and in terms of extending already long days. In addition, the cost of transporting pupils between sites is extremely high. As one commentator put it, *"taxi firms in this area have really benefited from the Learning and Skills Measure."*

6.17 The pupils that we spoke to also added their concerns and frustrations with the system. They had found difficulties with the level of transport required; the gap in between transport being provided and lessons starting; and the teaching styles of teachers at other providers:

- one pupil who had decided to study offsite said that she would not have done so had she realised how burdensome travelling to the other provider would be;

- pupils at one school were required to miss one timetabled lesson (ICT) in order to fit in with a partner school's transportation arrangements. The system was particularly irksome for three pupils who had to wait for an hour before their lesson started at the partner/delivering school. They also had to wait around at the delivering school at the end of the day for a lift back to their 'home school';

- the prospect of meeting pupils from other schools was "scary" for some at first, though they seemed to recognise the benefits of meeting new people after settling in on their courses. Interestingly, a number of pupils commented that they knew the other people on the course before going because they had 'met' them on social networking sites beforehand;

- two other pupils said that they had found it very difficult to come to terms with new teachers' styles, a problem which was compounded by a perception that the teacher at the delivery school approached things differently from a subject specialist to whom they had access at their 'home school';

- Year 12 pupils at one school felt that they did not have the support that they would like from a specialist subject teacher back at their home institution. This was particularly pronounced among those who were the only pupils from their school studying particular subjects at partner schools i.e. they had no-one to talk to between lessons.

6.18 These problems may be overcome as schools become more accustomed in delivering collaborative provision over time.

Transport

6.19 While 14 out of 20 respondents believe that transport arrangements have worked at least reasonably well for learners, transport is still regarded as a significant problem. Respondents voiced their concern that if collaboration is extended further they expect it to cause further pressure on transport arrangements. Rurality and cost feature prominently as reasons for arrangements to be ineffective.

> *"There will always be a reluctance on the part of some parents or learners to travel outside the home school environment. This tends to diminish with time as collaboration and partnership are seen to work effectively and deliver quality."* (Network Coordinator)

6.20 The current offer – particularly at KS4 – is dependent on the willingness of the learners to travel potentially very long distances to college or other school sites to undertake additional options (and the willingness of their parents to permit this). Schools' resistance to long distance pupil travel has led to some school-based provision of vocational subjects which may well involve an element of capital expenditure. This may create diseconomies of scale (e.g. regarding catering or other capital intensive facilities) and, arguably, less well grounded teaching.

6.21 Some areas subsidise local public transport passes for pupils, however, bus routes in these areas do not necessarily accommodate the needs of 14-19 learners. In one such area, bus tickets are provided that are purchased at a discounted rate centrally by the LA and distributed to schools. While this required extensive cooperation and support across the area, costs are now down from around £180,000 per year to £60,000, a saving of £120,000 per year. However, exclusive or extensive use of this method is only likely to be appropriate in densely populated areas with suitable public transport infrastructure.

6.22 In one case study area transport will be funded in the authority for the next year. However, beyond that time there is uncertainty regarding where funding will come from. Transport is organised centrally, the LA centrally procures contracts with taxi and minibus firms as required. One member of staff is employed who organises and monitors transport. The transport costs in Year 1 were £40k; they increased significantly in Year 2 to over £100k and stabilised in Year 3, even though there were more learners travelling.

6.23 One school said that the transport arrangements are fine for now while they are funded, however, when funding ceases and schools are left on their own *'there is no way'* it will work.

Rural Locations

6.24 Providers in rural locations face obvious barriers to partnership working: the distance between them makes travelling between sites either very time consuming, expensive or both.

6.25 Learners may be put off travelling to other sites because of the distances or time involved. Some of the learners we consulted with who were travelling for long periods of time each day said that they regretted their decision to take the course. This negative feedback may influence others considering a similar option in future.

6.26 One Network Coordinator saw the 14–19 agenda as essentially an urban construct, which was difficult to adapt to highly rural settings. He pointed out that while restructuring of 16–19 provision had been long discussed, the marginal nature of many of the area's High Schools (even at KS3 and KS4) was such that reorganisation of post-16 learning would inevitably make some schools unviable.

6.27 Working collaboratively in rural locations is challenging. However, there are solutions to overcome the issues. It could be argued that the collaboration agenda is currently being delivered by the most cumbersome means possible: transporting large numbers of young people. Alternative solutions, such as making increased use of peripatetic teachers or video conferencing are likely to be more efficient mechanisms to deliver courses collaboratively. For example, a group of teachers could be 'pooled' between a number of schools to ensure that they can offer a wide range of subject choices to pupils in their home school.

Use of ICT/E-Learning

6.28 Some areas have experimented with the use of video conferencing as a means of delivering courses across a number of sites. Welsh medium schools, in particular, appear to have been more innovative in the use of video-conferencing technologies.

6.29 In one example at a Welsh medium school, teachers at one site teach their own class and the pupils at the other site through a video link. A teaching assistant is also present in the 'video classroom' to collect homework and monitor the class.

6.30 Pupils were not as keen on the set-up, commenting that they do not feel that they learn as much while being taught through this medium. In addition, some teething technology issues have hampered some of the classes.

6.31 Similarly, one college had made extensive use of video conferencing to extend the KS5 provision that they had on offer, however, it had not been universally successful.

> *"A lot of the extension in post 16 provision has been achieved via Video Conferencing. However, it has generated mixed evaluation results. Some subjects are ok over the video link but for others we've found it just isn't suited."*

6.32 There is a widespread view among coordinators that video conferencing, and ICT facilities in general, are underused at the present time.

> *"There's not as much use of videoconferencing as there might be."* (Network Coordinator)

6.33 Potential barriers to wider roll-out of video conferencing include the training of teachers and the appropriateness of the technology for some subjects. Teachers or tutors should be appropriately trained from a pedagogical perspective to use the equipment, rather than just from a technical perspective. There is also a concern that video conferencing may not be as well suited to delivering vocational subjects.

Example of ICT Usage

6.34 In one area, the Network, alongside the neighbouring 14-19 Network, has invested heavily (circa £200k per annum over the last two years) in developing *"e-learning as an integral element"* of its approach to widening curriculum choice and encouraging inter-institutional collaboration.

6.35 Part of the county's ANDP funding has been used to meet the costs of a *"centre for e-learning excellence"*, known as GRe, which operates as a discrete unit within the schools support service.

6.36 GRe has developed a significant volume of bilingual, SCORM[10] compliant resources, focusing initially on those subjects where there was some experience of using video-conferencing to deliver courses i.e. Psychology, Sociology and Religious Education. More recently, resources have been developed to support teaching and learning in local priority subjects such as Retail, Engineering and Childcare (CACHE). These resources are available to the county's schools via their moodle, and some also feature on the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) Cymru web-site.

---

[10] Shareable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) is a standard for developing, packaging and delivering materials for online training courses.

6.37 Recently, the network has *"sold"* this approach to the other 14-19 Networks and they are likely to subscribe to the service in the future.

6.38 In parallel with this, the Network has sought to develop e-learning capacity within the county, by investing in video conferencing facilities at some schools and providing training to practitioners in the use of in video conferencing as part of a blended approach to teaching and learning.

6.39 Hitherto, only limited use has been made of video conferencing to deliver courses, and where it is used, it is generally seen as a means of *"enriching"* courses delivered in more traditional ways. However, the expectation is that an increasing proportion of more courses will be delivered via video conferencing over the next few years.

7 LEARNER SUPPORT

7.1 A major development that has occurred in Learner Support has been the introduction of the Learning Coach function. Each young person in Wales between the ages of 11-25 should receive support from a Learning Coach. The Learning and Skills Measure provides for Welsh Ministers to issue guidance on the provision of learner support services and to direct governing bodies to provide learner support services. The learning coach function is one aspect of the learner support services that should be provided.

7.2 We found that providers have taken the Learning Coach function forward to varying extents. Some decided that their existing Learner Support provision included the Learning Coach function to the degree that they did not feel the need to change what they were already doing. Others have taken the Learning Coach function forward more vigorously.

7.3 The research sought to understand how the Learning Coach function was being implemented in different areas. The development of the Learning Coach function, the various modes of delivery being used, and the impact of Learning Coaches, would warrant a report in itself. This section of the report considers:

- views on the Measure's influence on the quality of learning support;
- Learning Coach models;
- Learning Coach training;
- availability of funding.

Measure's Influence on Quality of Learner Support

7.4 Coordinators reported that where learner support has been influenced by the Measure, it has had a positive effect. A slight majority of coordinators (11 of 20) felt that the Measure had not influenced the quality of learner support. Almost all of the remaining nine coordinators (8 of 9), felt that the Measure had a positive effect on learner support (**Table 7.1**).

Table 7.1: 'To what extent would you agree or disagree that development of the Learning and Skills Measure has positively influenced the quality of learner support?'	
Strongly Agree	2
Agree	6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	11
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	0
Don't Know	0

7.5 Those who neither agreed nor disagreed above felt that it was too early to know what impact the Measure was having on learner support; that the support provided would vary on a provider by provider basis; or that the provision was already adequate.

> *"This will be very much dependent on the institution to which they belong, and will differ widely throughout not just any Authority but also throughout Wales. Whilst the Measure may ensure minimum standards of pastoral and learner support, good institutions were doing far more than this minimum already."* (Network Coordinator)

> *"The Learning and Skills Measure does not yet directly address the issue of learner support. The element relating to support has been delayed until the publication of a unifying document on the role of Youth Service / Learning Coach etc."* (Network Coordinator)

Variations with LA Areas

7.6 Learning Coach provision is not uniform within schools across the same area, much less schools in different areas.

7.7 For example, in one area the introduction of Learning Coaches and learner support has been very high on the agenda for the LEA and the 14-19 Network. This mixed picture meant that while in theory all learners have access to a coaching function, the depth of support provided in terms of specialist one-to-one provision is variable.

> *"We've increased the capacity of Learning Coaches across formal and informal settings and now all coaches have recognised standards in formal settings."* (Network Coordinator)

7.8 The degree of *"maturity and embeddedness"* of Learning Coaches however remains at different levels in different schools. The two extremes are one school which has four Full Time Learning Coaches (dedicated to the role i.e. no other teaching commitments).

> *"They are resourced to the hilt and it's a very successful model."* (Network Coordinator)

7.9 At the other end of the scale another school of a similar size has only one part-time Learning Coach.

7.10 A further example of this variation comes from the Wrexham area, where the Learning Coach function is perceived to be working well. However, Estyn identified that *"a few schools do not fully understand or recognise the skills of their Learning Coaches and sometimes use them as learning support assistants."*

Learning Coach Models of Delivery

7.11 Our research uncovered a wide spectrum of models of incorporating the Learning Coach function. These varied from school staff being designated as full-time Learning Coaches – and undertaking no other role – to a 'whole school' approach, where all school staff were trained in being Learning Coaches. The actual role varied too. Some Learning Coaches saw themselves solely as providers of academic support; while others viewed their role as being that of pastoral guidance.

7.12 Within one case study area, the local authority has undertaken widespread training of Learning Coaches. Initially, Learning Coaches started off as being school-based teachers, Deputy Heads or other teaching staff. However, they have found that those members of staff do not have time to undertake the Learning Coach function. Therefore, Teaching Assistants and cover supervisors; people who have some flexibility in their school day, now take the Learning Coach training voluntarily.

7.13 There are various examples of Learning Coach delivery, which have grown organically in schools to meet their needs:

- at one Sixth Form all of the students who take the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification are entitled to support from a Learning Coach. The Learning Coaches at the school have a case load of around 100 pupils each, who they meet on a monthly basis;

- NEET focussed Learning Coaches: in one area each Learning Coach has a case load of 12-15 young people who are NEET, or are at risk of becoming NEET. They are 'surrogate parents', helping pupils to get up in the morning and get to school in some cases. They work closely with the families of young people, spending a lot of time 'offsite' and support young people on bus journeys to offsite provision to make sure they get there;

- Welsh medium schools. In one area, each of the Welsh medium schools have appointed a Learning Coach, which will be a specific job role for one individual. The Welsh medium schools are working together to draw up a model that fulfils their needs. Teachers will meet the front-line entitlement for Learning Coach support, where young people require further support they will then be referred on to the specific Learning Coach;

- in another school assistant Heads of Year have been appointed and are undertaking the Learning Coach function. There is a team of five Learning Coaches who can work together on specific areas (such as when learners are making their choices/taking exams) to share the workload across the school at those 'pinchpoints';

- one local partnership is planning to employ a Learning Coach to work in each of their schools.

7.14 By focusing the work of Learning Coaches on NEET students, one local authority hopes to be able to impact upon the number of NEET young people who drop out of the system each year.

> *"Schools don't have the resources to address the needs of the NEET learners. The Learning Coaches can provide that additional support, working with young people to stop them dropping out. The NEET agenda needs extensive manpower; they have used funding from Cymorth to provide that."* (LA 14-19 Advisor)

7.15 One of the schools we visited had dedicated Learning Coaches in place and had been operating the model for the past three to four years. The Learning Coaches had no teaching responsibilities, although they did have prior teaching experience. The key points that emerged from discussions with Learning Coaches were that:

- Learning Coaches saw their role as being very academically focused. *"We're here to help with the school work – not to offer a tea and sympathy service".* The Learning Coaches were clear that non academic issues meant the need to refer pupils to counsellors (who were also available at the school);

- attendance, completion and achievement rates had raised notably since the introduction of the Learning Coach team at the school. One teacher said *"The Coaches have been a phenomenal success";*

- attitudes have changed significantly since the Learning Coach team started their work. Initially, there was stigma attached from a pupil perspective and some teachers saw them as a threat. That quickly disappeared and now the role is very much valued – which is underlined by the fact that teachers refer pupils actively to the Learning Coach service;

- there are key benefits attached to having stand alone Learning Coaches. This includes increased flexibility; they have the time and capacity to spend on group and one to one *"catch up activities"*. A lot more can be achieved by having stand alone staff;

- some innovative approaches are now starting to grow out of the Learning Coach function (e.g. peer tutoring);

- support from the Headteacher has been key to integrating the Learning Coaches into the school. Without such a degree of proactivity from the Head the programme would not have been as successful.

7.16 In another area, the LA is unclear on whether the Learning Coaches are people, processes or functions. They are unsure whether Learning Coach support is a universal entitlement for additional support or if it should just be targeted at the potentially disengaged. The LA targeted support initially at specific pupils, but from now on all students in Year 10 will have a Learning Coach.

7.17 The LA said that the Learning Coaches' primary role is to accompany pupils when they visit the college, ensuring that they behave well and that there is a communication link between the school and the college.

> *"We decided quite early on that we could save a lot of problems*
> *by sending the Learning Coach to the college with the pupils.*
> *They are much more likely to succeed if they have the support*
> *of a Learning Coach onsite."* (Head of 14-19 Development)

7.18 In this area, the colleges want the Learning Coach to take on a greater supervisory role with 14-16 pupils. Where Learning Coaches have come with students from a school they have changed the behaviour of young people by changing the college environment[11]. Young people can now see the link between college and school and know that they cannot misbehave. The colleges have gone through the protocols with the school Learning Coaches, their expectations and the communication routes to report things back to schools.

---

[11] There were initial problems whereby some Learning Coaches did not report or address bad behaviour in college because it was not the pupils from their school who were misbehaving. The college was keen that Learning Coaches should help to supervise all pupils.

"The Learner Coach role is about coordination; getting the Learning Coaches to meet together and work with teachers to develop strategies to support young people. If we're going to integrate key skills development across schools and colleges then we need to have good communication channels." (College 14-19 Coordinator)

"Where Learning Coaches work well there is good communication between the college and the school. Students perform better at college because they know that the communication is in place." (College 14-19 Coordinator)

"Every young person has a Learning Coach, although they might not call them a Learning Coach or know that is what we call them. The Learning Coach sorts out a lot of low-level problems at the college. Stuff that we wouldn't raise an eyebrow at in school can be a big issue in a college, so having the Learning Coach there really helps to smooth things out." (Single Sex 11-18 School Head)

7.19 The case study below gives an illustration of the way the Learning Coach function has been implemented in one school within one area. This case study is not representative of all schools within the area (the other school visited had a very different model) nor of other areas as they have each approached the Learning Coach requirement in a different manner. It is provided as an example of how implementation can work in practice.

Case Study – Learning Coach Roles

In one school, the Learning Coaches met individually with each year 11 pupil. One trained Learning Coach said that she had initially been sceptical about the value of having sessions with pupils who were performing well in school. However, she had found that in practice some of those who superficially were coping well actually had quite intense support needs and she was now converted to the approach.

The issues covered in the sessions included:

- behaviour;
- classwork;

- organisation (including revision techniques – *"even the bright ones often don't know how to plan"*);
- future plans (including curriculum choices);
- health and social life/friendships.

Up to an hour was allowed for each initial session, though some pupils needed less than this. For many pupils, the fact that she was not a teacher but a Learning Assistant was an advantage because she was not seen as a figure of authority. However in some cases *"with some of the brighter ones, this can backfire – they don't understand why they should talk to me."*

Relationships with Careers Wales were said to be excellent – with a Careers Wales counsellor based in the school – and their roles were seen to be complementary.

While the school had good (and separate) procedures for dealing with child protection issues, she had found some of the issues raised with her quite intense and difficult to deal with (such as the impact of divorce or panic attacks). Her concern was fuelled because she was very conscious that she was not trained in counselling:

"The need for emotional support has been larger than I expected"[12].

Learning Coach

The Learning Coach saw as a vindication of the school's approach that several of those she had helped most – including the pupil with severe panic attacks – had done significantly better than their predicted grades.

Sustainability

The school also emphasised that while the pilot with Learning Coaches was working well thus far –it was unlikely that the dedicated hours currently provided could be easily sustained if it were not for the ANDP funding.

7.20 Further research is required to understand which modes of Learning Coach delivery result in the greatest impact, and why this occurs.

---

[12] This concern led to a related point about the lack of support for Learning Coaches, given that they are exposed to difficult and demanding problems.

Learning Coach Policy Development

7.21 Criticism of Learning Coach developments was levelled on the basis that WAG had apparently initially seen the Learning Coach function as being stand alone, requiring 'dedicated' coaches. This model was seen as unrealistic for all providers, as a result, the function was being bolted into the role of mainstream teachers and tutors as part of their pastoral care responsibilities.

> *"What's happened is that a lack of funding for Learning Coaches to be separate has led to policy drift. This needs to be looked at more in terms of a function rather than as an individual. The training provision available is still based on the original policy."*

Coach Qualifications/Training

7.22 A key point made on Learning Coaches related to the OCN L4 qualification they are required to obtain. In one area both the LEA and the college thought that the course as it stands is *"too heavy and onerous"* (involving weekend study etc) *"We won't get all tutors to do that"*. The college is an accredited centre (OCN) to deliver the Learning Coach training and this had been a key element of feedback from existing staff.

7.23 Other consultees said that many schools felt that they could not release sufficient numbers of teaching staff for the training, and had often identified Learning Support Assistants for the role. However, training Learning Support Assistants had initially been difficult to square with the expectation that the qualification would be at Level 4. In practice it was felt that 'the right sort of people' – *"people really good at nurturing"* – were being identified but that they were not necessarily well qualified. However, WAG appeared to have accepted that a degree of pragmatism was needed about prior qualifications.

7.24 There was also some criticism levelled at WAG, with both the LEA and college in one area saying that WAG had over committed to using Higher Education as the provider for the Learning Coach training.

"There's a real lack of clarity about this now from WAG. They went for the HE model of delivering the training and it hasn't worked – it's not been appropriate for those who are taking it. Now they're finding it difficult to back out of that situation and they're sitting on it. What's actually needed is an approach that involves more CPD on an on-going basis linked more closely to the job."

Independence of IAG

7.25 Consultees and stakeholders across the board recognised the importance of **independent** advice and guidance. In principle, the Learning Coach may help here, but since they are tied to a particular organisation institution there is a concern that they may not operate independently. Schools and colleges reported their concerns about the independence of IAG that pupils would receive from staff at their home provider. One Learning Coach admitted that she tended to place specific emphasis on the benefits of staying in the school's Sixth Form.

> *"I did press them* [pupils] *to come back here, but I did really, really press them to go and look at other colleges too."*

Availability of Funding

7.26 Schools question the funding available for the Learning Coach function and feel there may need to be a change in resources over the coming years within schools to reflect the needs of the Learning Coach function. They are unsure how the Learning Coach entitlement is going to be sustained over the coming years.

7.27 The Learning Coaches are funded through the ANDP and every centre in the LA has a locally trained Learning Coach. The funding available for Learning Coaches is equivalent to that of a Level 3 Classroom Assistant. Therefore, using a teacher as a Learning Coach makes it a very expensive resource. The LA are "enthusiastic about the concept" of coaches and do believe that the intervention has a positive effect.

8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Impact of the Measure

8.1   The Measure has had a positive impact on collaborative working already. The number of courses offered by schools has increased to meet the needs of the Measure's banding requirements in 2009/10. Many schools have already made significant progress towards meeting the offer required by the Measure next year and even in 2012. It will be interesting to monitor if this progress is maintained.

8.2   The evidence also suggests that the widened curriculum is being actively pursued by learners. Take-up of courses has matched the increased offer.

8.3   Feedback from consultees suggests that more learners are taking vocational provision which has been offered to them. However, data on vocational course uptake is not reliable enough at present to give a clear indication of the changing balance between vocational and academic provision.

Impact on Collaboration

8.4   Perhaps the most pronounced change as a result of the Measure has been on providers 'at the margin' of partnership working. These are providers who:

- had a limited amount of involvement in partnership working previously;
- could work with others relatively easily (i.e. are not geographically isolated); and
- saw the potential benefits of partnership working but had not 'taken the leap' to work more collaboratively.

8.5   The Measure encouraged those providers to become more active participants in local collaborative groups, accelerating the pace of change. These providers may have required a change in culture to engage more actively in collaborative work, and for that reason they have probably experienced the greatest change.

8.6 Some providers were of course already collaborating significantly. The Measure provides a vindication of the strategic decisions they have previously undertaken to combat falling school roles and ensure they have a wide curriculum offer.

8.7 A small minority of providers have yet to engage fully in local partnership arrangements. Not engaging may be a result of logistical concerns, given their rural locations or the difficulties in arranging suitable transport to other locations, or a result of cultural factors, such as the academic focus of schools or Headteacher concerns about the nature of collaborative work. The Measure has arguably removed a certain level of autonomy from school Headteachers and given more strategic powers to the LEA and 14-19 Networks to push the agenda forward.

Impact on Welsh Medium Provision

8.8 The Measure has impacted on Welsh medium schools to differing extents, depending upon their prior history of partnership working. Some Welsh medium providers with well established collaborative arrangements may not have been affected by the Measure as they were already meeting its requirements. However others, who were not previously collaborating, have started to do so.

8.9 Welsh medium schools appear to have been more proactive in their use of ICT and cross-border collaborations to increase their curriculum offer. Video conferencing in particular has been used but initial feedback from it has been mixed.

Efficiency Gains

8.10 There have been some instances of efficiency gains as a result of partnership working. These gains have primarily occurred through reduced duplication of courses, or 'subject collapsing' as it was termed in one area.

8.11 Nevertheless, consultees reported that the efficiency gains realised thus far have been outweighed by the additional costs they have faced in delivering collaborative provision. The current collaborative solution tends to be to transport pupils between providers, rather than teachers. Increasing the use of peripatetic teachers could be one method to find further cost savings.

Sustainability

8.12 There are two perspectives to the question of sustainability: sustainability of partnership arrangements, and sustainability of the curriculum offer.

8.13 Partnership arrangements can be sustained through achieving the 'buy-in' of all Headteachers and college Principals in the local area, especially in relation to the model used to distribute funding between 'home' and 'host' providers. Strong network leadership and binding contractual arrangements will also help to sustain partnership working.

8.14 The sustainability of the curriculum offer is closely tied in with the availability of funding and the current use of ANDP funding. Collaboration costs, in particular the costs of transporting pupils between sites, are considered to be very high. Where costs are currently met by ANDP monies, providers are concerned about who will fund these additional costs when ANDP funding ceases.

8.15 Partnerships are currently fulfilling the needs of the Measure by transporting significant numbers of pupils from one provider to another to access learning, which can be both expensive and logistically daunting. In future, alternative means of meeting the mechanism should be further explored. Increasing the use of peripatetic teachers would have the twin benefit of minimising student transport and maintaining subject specialist teachers.

Challenges Faced in Collaborative Delivery

8.16 Our research identified a number of logistical challenges that are faced by Network Coordinators and members in working together. Many of these challenges, such as timetable alignment and transport, can be worked through and solutions will be identified as partnership working improves over time.

8.17 Strong network leadership and a commitment from partners to working together are success factors in identifying appropriate solutions.

Impact on Learner Support

8.18 There was some evidence that the Measure has led to improvements in the provision of learner support. This has primarily been achieved through the introduction of the Learning Coach function.

8.19 The Learning Coach function has been implemented very differently between networks and providers across Wales. Stakeholders appear to have taken the Learning Coach function forward and tailor it to their local needs.

8.20 Where the Learning Coach function is 'stand alone' (i.e. the Learning Coach has no other teaching responsibilities) there is increased capacity available to dedicate to this function. This 'stand-alone' approach is working well in one area in particular already in terms of addressing student progression, attendance and attainment.

8.21 However, overall, it is too early to say what the impact of the Learning Coach function will be.

Recommendations

Recommendation One: Improve Course Data Collection

8.22 Currently the data collected on the curriculum offer is not considered robust enough to allow in-depth examination.

8.23 To effectively evaluate the impact of the Learning Pathways policy over the long-term, take-up data is required that shows which courses are vocational and which are delivered outside of the students home school, requiring transport.

Recommendation Two: Marketing Of Vocational Qualifications

8.24 Parents are a significant provider of learner support, yet they are often unaware of the benefits of vocational qualifications and, instead, guide their children towards traditional, academic qualifications, which may not be the most suitable route for them. In addition, there is also a concern that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) may not acknowledge the value of vocational qualifications.

8.25 To overcome this cultural barrier and change parental perceptions of vocational qualifications, a national marketing campaign targeted at pupils and parents should be undertaken to promote their credibility and value. This campaign should promote vocational qualifications as providing young people with suitable skills to progress either to employment or further study.

8.26 HEIs should also be encouraged to acknowledge and recognise the value of vocational courses.

Recommendation Three: Encourage LAs to Learn from Good Practice in Partnership Working

8.27 A key success factor in strong and effective networks is a strong presence from the local authority in the partnership. Their strong leadership can help to engage schools who are otherwise reluctant to participate. Network Coordinators with experience of working in schools are often very well respected by other Headteachers and senior college staff locally; this can be an important catalyst to partnership working.

8.28 WAG should encourage LAs, where possible, to have a strong presence in local networks. LAs may be able to take a more strategic view on issues that affect the operation of collaborative provision, for example, by encouraging schools to operate the same start and finish times, which can have a positive impact on the delivery of joint activities.

Recommendation Four: Review Effectiveness of Learning Coach Roles

8.29 The Learning Coach function has been proactively taken forward across providers in Wales. LAs and providers have implemented the Learning Coach function in a wide variety of ways to meet their local needs.

8.30 Evaluating the effectiveness of different models of Learning Coach delivery will be important. It will allow WAG to identify which models of delivery are the most effective in practice, to share good practice and to identify what impact Learning Coaches have had on young people's choices.

APPENDIX A

DATA PERFORMANCE INDICATOR PAPER

Informing the Implementation of the

Learning and Skills Measure:

Data/Performance indicator Paper

CONTENTS

Page

ANNEX: DETAILED ISSUES RELATING TO INDICATORS

1) **INTRODUCTION**

   a) This paper focuses on data availability and possible performance indicators to support future evaluation of the Learning and Skills Measure (the Measure).

   b) In terms of data analysis there are some limitations to the depth of detail currently made available due to Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) concerns about quality and consistency. In particular we do not have details about the take-up of vocational and collaborative provision for the current year.

   c) Section 2 of this report sets out the indicators which we feel are appropriate to support future evaluation of the Measure.

   d) Section 3 makes some recommendations as to next steps to agreeing and embedding this approach with stakeholders.

   e) An Annex provides a list of detailed issues relating to indicators.

2) ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS MEASURE

a) Some development work has already been started through the analysis undertaken by Susan Full and indicators by Hilary Griffith. Furthermore, local authorities/Networks have been thinking in more detail about their use of data to inform decision-making and to evaluate the impact of changes.

b) Below we discuss the following:

   i) Views on data arising from the main evaluation study;

   ii) The development of an impact assessment framework for the Measure.

Views on Data Arising from the Main Evaluation Study

c) During the study consultees were concerned about the extent to which current data can be used reliably to provide a full assessment of the impact of the Measure: *"the steering group is not convinced that the data is there."* Nor is there confidence in the robustness of the available data.

d) Based on the consultations, assessment of the data needs, and a review of data provided by WAG, key findings are as follows:

   • initial data collated by WAG provides some indication of the scale of the curriculum offer, however, it does not provide sufficient detail to assist us in understanding the full extent of the breadth and depth of the curriculum offer and sustainability;

   • WAG staff have expressed some concerns about the consistency of the curriculum offer data as it has not been collated through WAG statistical processes (as is the case for learner performance data). This same issue will apply to some of the other information that could potentially be captured across the networks but is not currently routinely collected and collated;

   • Evidence from discussions with case study Networks, suggest that more consideration is being given to data and data analysis at a Network level, however, there may be issues about consistency across Networks. For example:

      (1) there was a strong feeling amongst, particularly the LEA and College officials that the impact of the Measure would not be truly measurable until 2012. Other views include: *"We think it's*

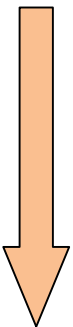*essential to have at least five years worth of data to be able to measure impact";*

(2) there are also issues in terms of monitoring data relating to collaboration which will make this challenging. Specifically, where students take exams in other institutions (i.e. not their home school), this complicates the analysis of data and requires a disaggregation process to be undertaken. We are aware that work to address and overcome this and other issues is currently well advanced within one LEA. This is being done for the last three years which will effectively create a baseline. The LEA then intends to monitor progress against a range of key indicators and compare these to the baseline position which in effect will enable value judgements to be made as to the effectiveness of changes introduced as a result of the Measure:

i) overall subject uptake;

ii) subject uptake by institution;

iii) completion rates by subject and by institution;

iv) attainment levels;

v) value added (based on a system of predicted grades);

vi) attendance

The Development of an Impact Assessment Framework for the Measure

e) The Measure itself is a very specific piece of legislation designed to achieve some defined objectives to support the wider 14-19 Learning Pathways policy. Therefore, in designing performance indicators for the Measure we must be clear about the short term outcomes and longer term impacts (Figure 2.1).

f) The diagram describes broad areas in which indicators need to be generated relating to the Measure and the 14-19 Learning Pathways, along the spectrum between outcomes and impact.

Figure: 2.1: Developing an Impact Assessment Framework

	Measure	14-19 Learning Pathways
outcomes	Target offer bandings achieved (overall and for vocational provision)	
	Greater choice is perceived and understood by YP and parents	
	More effective use of resources	Change in patterns of take-up, more closely aligned to individual choices (recognising limits of timetabling/resources)
		YP more committed to and enjoying their learning
		YP perform better in their learning
impact		Maximise the potential of each individual to achieve and contribute to society

g) This exercise has been undertaken with reference to both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Below we present a set of indicators, map them against the above framework and discuss data collection and measurement issues which have come to light as a result of this research.

Proposed indicators

h) Many of the indicators below are currently in existence, although for some there may be challenges in gaining consistent data. Most indicators will apply to the 14-16 and 16-19 age groups, although data sources may vary.

Quantitative indicators

i) **range of curriculum on offer** in terms of number of courses – (the Measure)

j) range of **vocational, collaborative and Welsh medium curriculum on offer** in terms of number of courses – (the Measure)

k) **take up of curriculum offer** in terms of number of courses and number of students

l) take up of **vocational, collaborative and Welsh medium curriculum offer** in terms of number of courses

m) **outcomes** for young people (at KS4 and KS5) as a whole, on vocational, collaborative and Welsh provision

n) **reductions in numbers who are NEET**

o) **learner destinations**

p) **reduced exclusions** (due to a more relevant curriculum)

q) **reduced absenteeism** (due to a more relevant curriculum)

r) number and proportion of **learners entering collaborative, vocational and Welsh medium provision**

s) **learner satisfaction**

t) number of **learning coaches trained per provider**

u) **cost effectiveness**

Qualitative indicators

v) the **extent to which the offer is taken up** and the reasons for not doing so (to check it is not due to unacceptable logistics)

w) **teacher/tutor perceptions**

x) **whether the Measure is leading to higher skills levels** and people getting higher skilled jobs

y) **views of impact from existing networks** eg. Fforwm, teaching unions and head teacher associations

z) increased **intensity of provider collaboration**

aa) effective **independent advice and guidance**

Mapping the indicators to the framework

bb) In order to gain an idea of the spread across the outcome to impact spectrum and to clarify the balance between indicators that more directly relate to the Measure and the wider policy we have plotted them in a diagrammatic way (Figure 2.2)

Figure: 2.2: Performance Indicators Covering Outcomes and Impacts
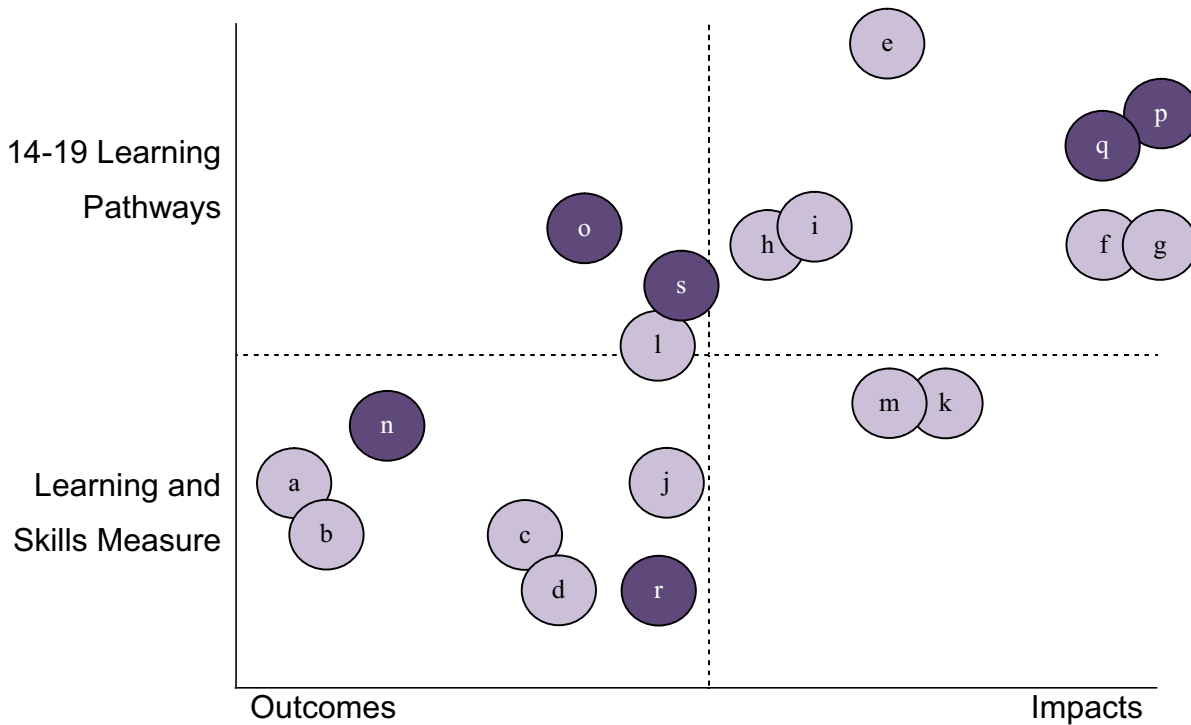
Note: pale colour=quantitative indicators, dark colour=qualitative indicators

cc) Some other suggestions for indicators which we have discounted are listed below for completeness, with an explanation of why they were excluded:

i) **lessen the gap between areas offering the widest choice and those offering the least** – this may be an aspiration but there is a risk of it being achieved through a limitation on extending choice;

ii) **inspection findings** – while a good independent source of provider quality the new inspection regime involves variable lengths of time, limiting the comparability of grades;

iii) **reduced level 1 and increase level 2 volumes**. The aim of this is to measure the extent to which better selection of courses leads to more people selecting higher level provision. However, it presumes that the starting position of all learners remains consistent over time. Also performance on any selected courses will be important to establish if it is the right course, which is included in the list;

iv) **longitudinal research to explore the effects of participation in different courses upon learners**. While this would be an interesting research study it would be difficult to compare across the broad range of courses available.

3) RECOMMENDATIONS

    a) The next steps should include the following elements:

        i) consultation with the 22 areas about their views on these indicators and the extent to which some data might be available at a local level;

        ii) more detailed work to ensure consistent network level data is available around learners travelling and transport costs;

        iii) piloting the indicators where data is available as soon as possible to build up a baseline for timeseries data;

            – some will currently be available from other sources;

            – some will be retrospectively available which will help depict the trends.

        iv) additional research regarding some indicators to test how they might work in practice and detailed specification.

ANNEX: DETAILED ISSUES RELATING TO INDICATORS

Quantitative indicators	Source	Issues
b) **range of curriculum on offer** in terms of number of courses – (the Measure)	WAG data from Careers Wales online	By domain
c) range of **vocational, collaborative and Welsh medium curriculum on offer** in terms of number of courses – (the Measure)	WAG data from Careers Wales online	Identification of 'collaborative' and Welsh medium' is currently not clear
d) **take up of curriculum offer** in terms of number of courses and number of students	WAG data from Network returns	By domain
e) take up of **vocational, collaborative and Welsh medium curriculum offer** in terms of number of courses	WAG data from Network returns	Identification of 'collaborative' and Welsh medium' is currently not clear
f) **outcomes** for young people (at KS4 and KS5) as a whole, on vocational, collaborative and Welsh provision	WAG data: http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=13371 http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/post16ed2009/hdw20090528/?lang=en	
g) **reductions in numbers who are NEET**	http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/post16ed2008/hdw20080729/?lang=en	
h) **learner destinations**	http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=3810	Post-16 data not being published but worked on
i) **reduced exclusions**	http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/h	

	(due to a more relevant curriculum)	eadlines/schools2009/hdw200903312/?lang=en	
j)	**reduced absenteeism** (due to a more relevant curriculum)	http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=6893	
k)	number and proportion of **learners entering collaborative, vocational and Welsh medium provision**	Post-16 PLASC / LLWR	Challenges of accurately isolating collaborative, vocational and Welsh medium provision
l)	**learner satisfaction**	Three possible sources referenced in Hilary Griffiths' paper: • Learner satisfaction using data from Learner and parent questionnaires • Learner satisfaction data from Learner focus groups questions • Learner satisfaction using data from pupil/student councils	Questions re consistency of surveys (e.g. questions and timing) May end up being a more qualitative indicator?
m)	number of **learning coaches trained per provider**	WAG data	
n)	**cost effectiveness**	Cost per successful qualification aim Cost of travel per learner	Consistency of costing information and in particular of isolating travel costs
Qualitative indicators			
o)	the **extent to which the offer is taken up** and reasons for not doing so (to check not due to unacceptable logistics)	Through ad hoc research	
p)	**teacher/tutor perceptions**	Through ad hoc research	

q)	**whether the Measure is leading to higher skills levels** and people getting higher skilled jobs	Would need to track individual case studies	
r)	**views of impact from existing networks** eg. Fforwm, teaching unions and head teacher associations	consultations	
s)	increased **intensity of provider collaboration**	Through ad hoc research, including review of Estyn reports	
t)	effective **independent advice and guidance**	Through ad hoc research	