



**Evidence to the Children and Young People's Committee
on the Implementation of the Learning & Skills (Wales) Measure 2009
on behalf of Cardiff 14-19 Network**

The information below is in addition to the evidence previously submitted from a regional perspective.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity we had to present a regional report on behalf of SE Wales and to engage in dialogue with Committee Members on a crucial debate about the educational opportunities that are now available to young people through the Learning & Skills Measure. I would like to take this opportunity to add some specific views drawing on the experience of the Cardiff 14-19 Network. Some illustrative diagrams to show the arrangement of the Cardiff 14-19 network are also attached. Each partnership provides a local area curriculum with the exception of the Inclusion Partnership which nevertheless avails itself of the courses offered through the other partnerships.

Entitlement

Prior to the Measure there was considerable variation in the curriculum offer being made to learners in different institutions. For example, schools with affluent catchment areas would offer a very small selection of vocational course because of the comparatively few learners requiring them. These learners were then at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods where the choice was greater. By bringing schools together in partnerships and creating the local area curriculum many of these inequities have been removed as schools collaborate, pool students and put on a good selection of vocational programmes. This has been a significant benefit from the Measure.

The emphasis on Learning Coaching as an entitlement for young people has also raised this aspect of support work in schools to the benefit of many students.

Qualifications in the local area Curriculum

Although there is a separate review of Qualifications taking place nevertheless this has connections with the Measure. Only qualifications in the DAQW can count towards the local area curriculum. There are currently many vocational qualifications in the DAQW that do not have performance points attached to them (although they should have – there is an administrative backlog). Then again not every qualification with performance points is eligible to be used by schools in calculating their performance measures. There is considerable change going on in England and decisions of a commercial nature being taken by Exam Boards which may limit and restrict the choices available in Wales. I believe the Committee needs to be mindful of these changes and the tensions they are creating. Westminster, WG, Exam Boards, schools, industry & commerce and the interests of the learners are all pulling in somewhat different directions. The Learning & Skills Measure sets the learners needs clearly at the forefront and we need to work hard to ensure that the needs of learners in Wales are being met and protected.

Pre-16 and Post-16

The implementation of the Measure is affecting these two groups of students differently.

With respect to Pre-16 we have been able to provide a greater range of vocational offers and match the aspirations and interests of a greater number of learners. We have also been able to extend this offer to a wider ability range than in the past. Both of these are positives and standards of achievement continue to rise. With learners at the more disengaged end of the spectrum these vocational courses are often the only thing that they attend. They provide a lifeline and a way of keeping them engaged and often has a positive impact on their ability to hold down courses back in school. With progression routes developing to post-16 we are seeing increased retention rates into post-16. This is also being reflected in the reduction of young people who are NEET.

In post-16 we are seeing higher staying on rates. The more significant benefits here are for learner's choice. As I mentioned in the evidence session, our surveys show that up to 60% of Year 11 learners did not get their 1st choice combination of subjects and had to settle for something less. There are also benefits in keeping alive minority subjects which might otherwise disappear without the ability to collaborate – Music, Geology, Classics, Modern Languages, Welsh 2nd language, a number of vocational courses at Level 3 that are now offered to 6th forms but would disappear from the offer if it was not for the Measure.

Whilst post-16 courses can be self-sustaining in terms of funding the same cannot be said for pre-16 vocational programmes where a WG premium is needed to support them. Since group sizes on these courses are frequently limited to 12 (about half the size of a GCSE course) staffing costs are naturally increased and rise above the levels that schools can pay for from their Age Weighted Pupil Units of funding (AWPU). Hence my assertion in the evidence session that compete removal of additional funding support will result in the collapse of this provision.

To illustrate this point from a Cardiff perspective our collaborative vocational provision has grown from around 200 learners a few years ago to around 1500 now with about 100 courses offered to Y10 & Y11. We deliver this against a budget of £1.4 million where the 14-19 grant contributes 60% of the costs and schools contribute 40%. The schools could not cover the 60% component if it was withdrawn and this would severely restrict the opportunities for learners in Cardiff.

Other gains

In discussions with our local partnerships of schools they have identified other positives to emerge from this new way of working introduced by the Measure. They cite the increase in exposure of young people to those from different cultures, the mixing of learners from different schools, the impact on particular communities where learners are very reluctant to travel but are now doing so (often right across the city) in order to access their courses and building confidence and skills.

For the future

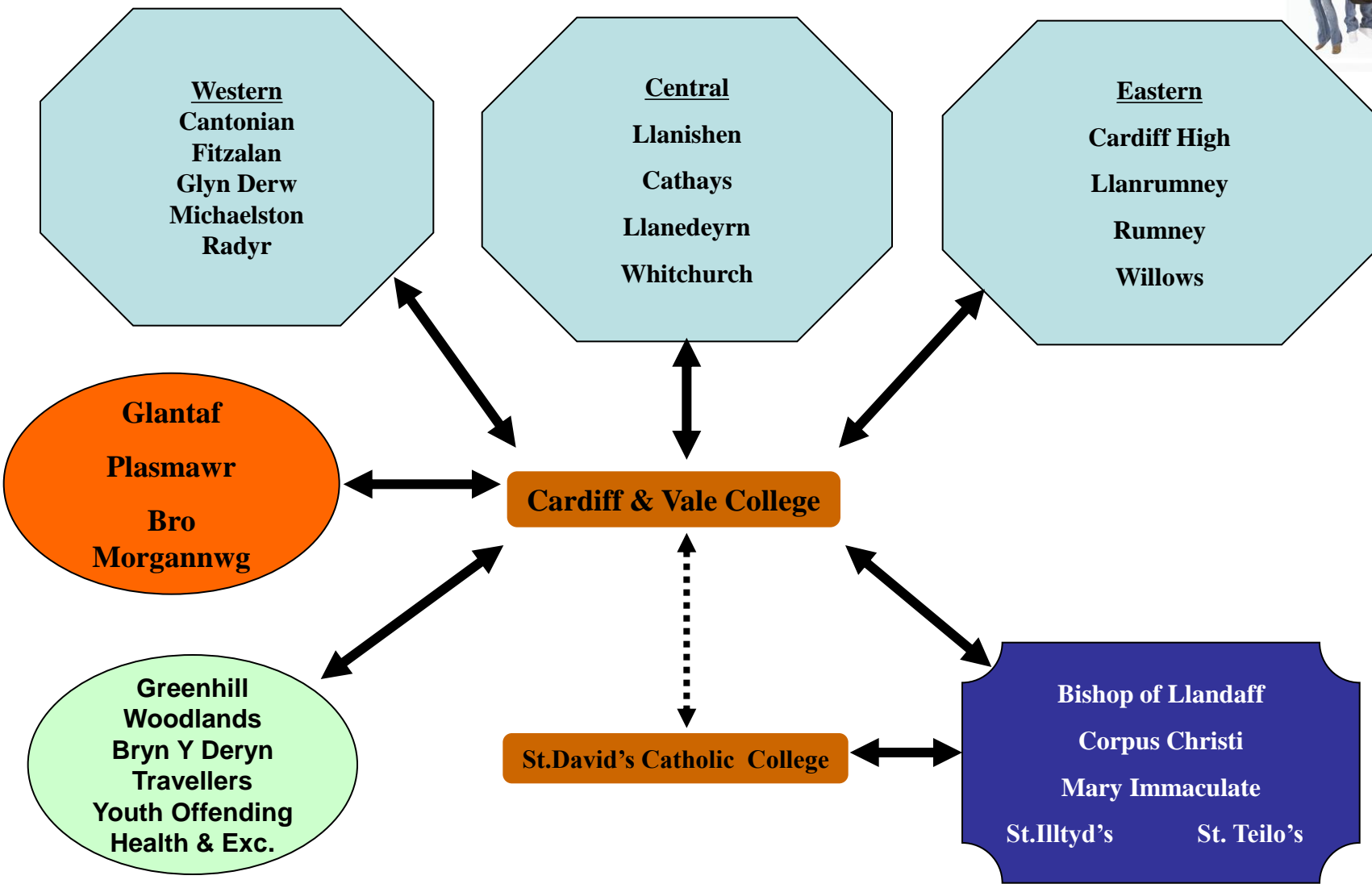
We are looking for consistency in policy and continuation that will allow us to fully embed the changes and positive benefits. We do not want more change and uncertainty.

We believe that the Measure and its requirements are mutually compatible with the efforts to improve standards of achievement. The Measure is quite clear that provision should be built around high quality and that if we deliver on that by default standards will rise.

We are looking for funding streams that will allow for the long term sustainability of vocational programmes.

With regard to regional working we see that there are good opportunities for mutual support and sharing successful solutions and expertise.

John Fabes, 14-19 Network Co-ordinator for Cardiff, November 2011.





Metropolitan Learning Conference / MLC

Encompasses

Cardiff Learning Partnership (Transformation)

14-19 Network

Transformation
sub-group



Curriculum & Learning Pathways

Managers group

E

C

W

F

W
M

I

The Local Partnerships:



Working groups



NEETs
Partnership

Quality
Assurance

Learner
Support

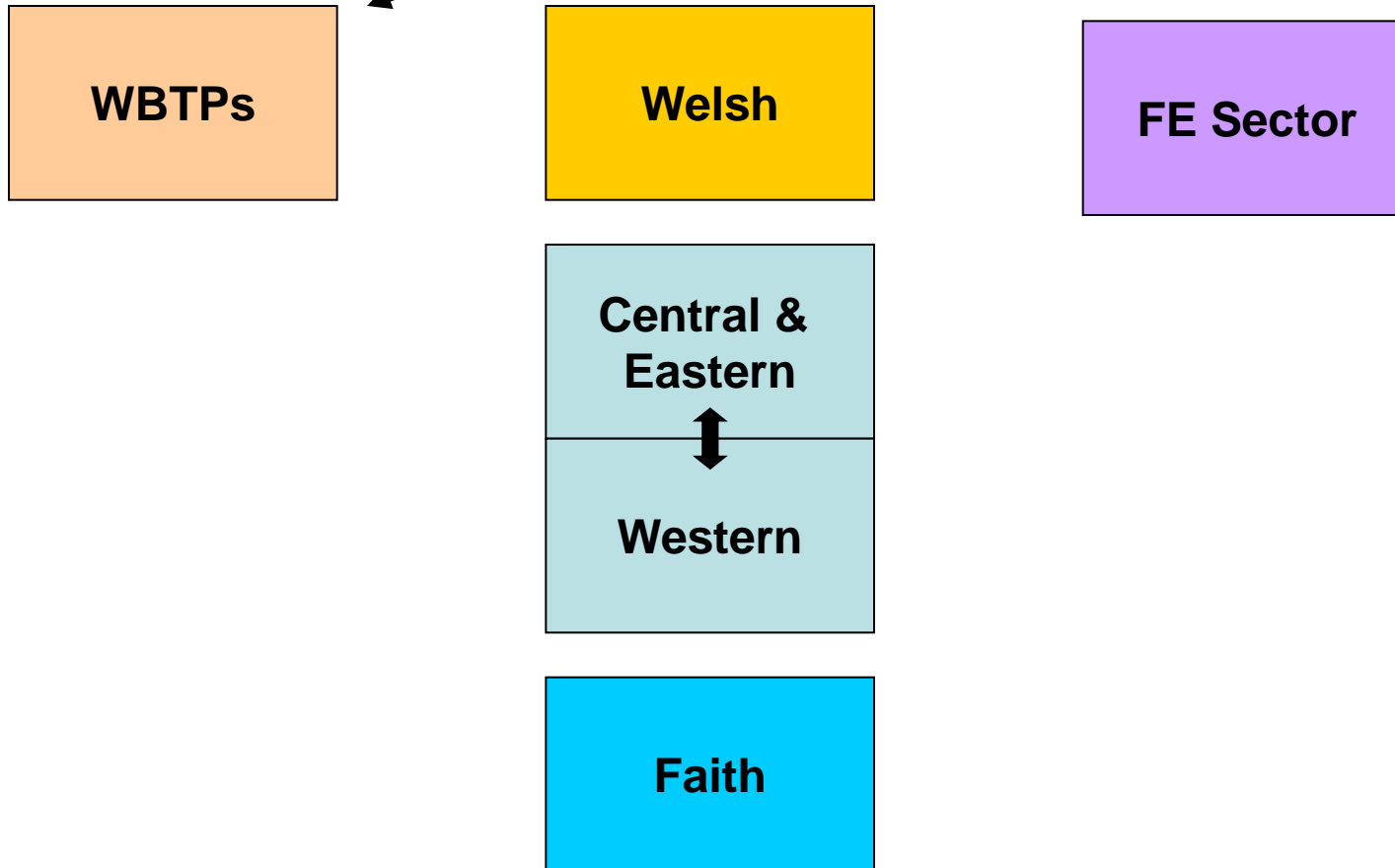
Learning
Core



Transforming Education & Training Provision in Cardiff

4 Local Area Curricula 16-18

Underpinned by



Twilight & Saturday provisions