# Grwpiau Ffocws Strategol
# Strategic Focus Groups

Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
**Carmarthenshire**
County Council

# Strategic Focus Groups

**Background**
The Carmarthenshire County Council Education and Children's Services Department's Strategic Progress is to be operationally and strategically steered through a series of collaborative 'Focus Groups', aligning to the department's business plan.

**The aim and purpose of these Strategic Focus groups is to ensure that:**
- Our vision to 2032 is promoted, '*that children and young people are happy, safe and thriving, fulfilling their personal, social and learning potential'*.
- We fulfil our moral purpose, that:
- '*Every child and young person is valued and valued equally'*.

- We are responsive to the changing needs of our children and young people and to the professionals who provide their care, support and education.
- Our strategies are co-constructed, delivered and evaluated across the department, linking to the Corporate and Departmental aims and vision.
- Schools, settings and services are provided with good quality, effective support and professional development in line with their children and young person's needs.
- We collegiately monitor and evaluate the impact of our service strategies, informing future focus areas.

There will be <u>one</u> focus group to encompass each of our <u>eight</u> Departmental priority areas:

| Focus Group | Priority Area | Chair (HOS) |
|---|---|---|
| **Inclusion and Engagement** | **Ensure a proactive, inclusive education system,** | **Aneirin Thomas** |
| **Teaching and Learning** | **Ensure excellent progress for all learners** | **Elin Forsyth** |
| **Safeguarding Children** | **Ensure all children and young people are happy, safe and thrive, overcoming poverty** | **Jan Coles** |
| **Wellbeing** | **Foster very good mental and physical health for all** | **Aeron Rees** |
| **Leadership** | **Ensure that aspirational Leadership leads to excellent progress for all learners** | **Elin Forsyth** |
| **Sustainable Communities** | **Deliver high standards of bilingual education in increasingly modern and sustainable community focussed environments** | **Simon Davies** |
| **Y Gymraeg** | **Ensure successful bilingual & multilingual development for all** | **Aeron Rees** |
| **Departmental Operations** | **Provide high quality support services that impact on the efficiency of the education system** | **Nia Thomas** |


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*Note: These groups to work independently or together depending on the nature of the research and developmental work to be undertaken.*

*There may be sub-groups that sit alongside this tier within different divisions e.g within Teaching and Learning there are sub-groups providing and evaluating support for Literacy, Numeracy and digital.*

**The Strategic Focus groups will provide opportunities for members to:**

- Act as system leaders, fostering high level thinking at a Local Authority level
- Consider the county wide perspective, thus avoiding partisan and parochial mindsets
- Declare openly if there are any conflicts of interest
- Co-construct the SFG action plan in line worth the main priorities
- Individual members be assigned to lead and report back on priority area to develop, which will include activity outside the meeting in sub-groups.
- Support each other's wellbeing, through partnership working, sharing inspiring and innovative practice.
- Share current challenges pertinent to settings and schools within the current context, collectively sharing potential solutions and constructive experiences.
- Share knowledge, research, and practical expertise.
- Combine expertise in the development of strategy to address the changing needs of our children and young people.
- Provide time for reflection and evaluation, establishing a culture of enquiry, innovation and exploration.
- Request further support and guidance from colleagues across the department, strengthening divisional links and building trusted relationships.
- Ensure the professional development of all enabling officers to become the best they can be when supporting our schools and settings.
- Work alongside a broad range of professionals and external agencies to the benefit of all within the wider school community of Carmarthenshire.
- Members to work between meetings in pursuit of the group's objectives, with a focus on impact

**Membership**

- Chairs are to oversee nominations and invitations to each group. This will be conditional on prevailing workstreams and priorities and will vary and be refreshed from year to year, drawing from:
  - Departmental Managers at 3rd tier
  - Two headteachers (preferably one primary, one secondary/special)
  - Nominated representative from Partneriaeth

- HoS to determine the most effective and efficient staffing levels for individual focus areas in line with business plan priorities, but can be nominally 8-12 persons as optimum

**Reporting and escalation:**
The focus groups will report to and contribute towards development within each of the following, each half term:
- DMT – Highlight report for each focus group
- Departmental Full Team
- Headteacher Networks.

**The focus groups will respond to and be informed by:**
- Divisional SLT
- Divisional Team Meetings
- Departmental Full Team
- Headteacher Networks

**Meeting Schedule:**
Monthly meetings will resume from November 2022 onwards.
Length of meeting: 1 to 1.5 hours

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**ESTYN**

During Estyn's recent inspection it was noted:

The authority has demonstrated its ability to respond quickly to challenging situations, such as its response to the challenges involved in providing services and support during the COVID-19 pandemic and during the subsequent recovery period. The decision to tailor and build on the work of the strategic groups established at that time is a robust example of how the authority has implemented its learning from that difficult experience.

**Cameo: A collaborative method of discussing, challenging, monitoring and leading the work to meet the priorities of the Education Service**

In order to respond to challenges during the pandemic, the authority established a number of groups to communicate and come to joint decisions with schools and other partners. This was a useful method for reaching agreed decisions and to ensure a clear flow of communication. The authority builds on these experiences by tailoring the groups and establishing a range of strategic groups. The strategic groups, which include members from the authority's leaders and officers, headteachers and other multi-agency representatives, are now a core part of discussing, challenging, monitoring and leading the work of meeting the education service's 8 main priorities. The groups are as follows:

| Focus Group | Priority area / aim |
|---|---|
| Inclusion and Engagement | Ensure a proactive, inclusive education system |
| Teaching and Learning | Ensure excellent progress for all learners |
| Child Safeguarding | Ensure that all children and young people are happy, safe and thriving and overcome poverty |
| Well-being | Foster very good mental and physical health for all |

| Leadership | Ensure that ambitious leadership leads to excellent progress for all learners |
|---|---|
| Sustainable Communities | Deliver high standards of bilingual education in environments that focus on the increasingly modern and sustainable community |
| The Welsh Language | Ensure successful bilingual and multilingual development for all |
| Departmental Operations | Provide high quality support services that affect the efficiency of the education system |

**Key Priorities**

Leaders act meaningfully to ensure a clear alignment between corporate level improvement plans, such as the Corporate Strategic Plan (2022-2027), the Education Department Plan (2022-2032) to faculty plans, such as plans to develop the school curriculum and pupils' well-being. This is helping to promote a strong understanding among leaders and officers of their main aims and objectives for improvement. Officers, schools and other stakeholders are also clear about the authority's and the education service's key priorities.

<p align="right">Estyn 2023</p>

The education Department make effective use of the SFG to deliver Business Plan objectives at all levels.

The key objectives for 2023/34 are as follows:

### Inclusion and Engagement

Additional Learning Needs
- Consult and develop new EOTAS Strategy and policy
- finalising of the ALN Strategy
- Development of an ALN Quality Assurance Framework
- develop an effective digital platform which will support schools, settings and the LA to create, store and monitor provision mapping, decision making processes and IDPs and IDP reviews
- Continue to develop strategic planning and raising capacity across the early years sector
- Support for early identification of emerging needs.
- Continue to develop effective early years integrated pathways
- input to the Flying Start (FS) Service in order to help optimise the local offer for preschool children with Additional Learning Needs
- Specialist Setting Entry and Exit Criteria document

Education Psychology Service
- Continue to clarify and plan ECPS delivery to implement the post 16 guidance from WG
- Embed Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Toolkit, Mindfulness Toolkit, Emotional Literacy Support Assistance (ELSA), trauma informed practice, and attachment awareness training into core training in schools
- Continue to provide guidance, advice and training to ensure quality set up and maintenance of Nurture Group
- PECP to continue to Lead Independent School and Community-Based Counselling Service commissioned delivery for Carmarthenshire

Gypsy Traveller Service
- Monitor and support GRT learners/families with attendance issues.
- Update 'Traveller Achievement Service' Handbook for schools.
- Develop a robust system to track GRT pupils attainment

Multi Ethnic Achievement Service
- To improve accuracy of identification and recording of EAL data
- Revise MEAS Handbook

- To develop resources to support WAL
- For schools to gain an accurate overall picture of provision for EAL/WAL and areas for improvement
- To raise awareness of trauma informed practice to better support refugee/as new arrivals

Elective Home Education
- Embed the core offer for EHE learners, in line with WG expectations which includes
- Review LA processes and documentation in light of new EHE guidance due to be released by WG

School Attendance
- Continue to fulfil statutory duties around persistent absentees and children missing from education.
- Continue to provide advice support and guidance to schools

Behaviour Service
- PHASE 1 - Deliver key training to enhance whole school approaches and ethos
- Finalise Bullying Policy
- Review Exclusion Policy and reporting process
- Positive Handling reporting Process
- PHASE 1 and PHASE 2 - To create a needs led proactive and reactive service for schools through the Behaviour Support Community Team
- To develop systems for data collection, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery

## Teaching and Learning

**Implementation of the Curriculum For Wales:**
- Secure Strategy and professional learning in relation to Curriculum Design; translating the theory into practice
- Welsh government and cross regional meetings; sharing key focus areas and expectations in a timely manner
- Ensure effective use financial resources
- Further strengthen transition. (Early Years onwards)
- Further develop the cluster strategy.
- Develop sharing strategies, strengthening the self-improving school culture.
- Estyn - Provide support for schools to evaluate their current curriculum and provision for local and Welsh history and culture and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history and culture and how to plan for improvement
- Non-Maintained

**Ensure high standards of Teaching and Learning in all schools and settings, in line with the 12 pedagogical principles.**
- 2.1 Planning for raising the level of challenge and independence of thinking skills, solving problems

o   2.2 Develop strategies for developing a shared understanding of assessment and progression across clusters.

**Ensure (Promote /develop) skills progression in all schools**
o   3.1 Ensure T&L effectively Welsh, Bilingual and multilingual language skills, include BSL.
o   3.2 Ensure progression in cross curricular skills – literacy, numeracy and digital. ( AI)
o   3.3 Ensure progression in the Integral skills
o   3.4 Ensure progression in the cross-cutting themes

**Ensure equitable YSS support across schools**
o   4.1 Strive for Youth Work Quality Mark- Gold Award in 2022
o   4.2 Implement recommendations from the Families First review of School Based Youth Work (2022) pertaining to the school-based youth work offer
o   4.3 Plan to develop community impact of YSS provision

**Develop Learning pathways and response to RLSP**
o   5.1 Extend Post 16 collaborative working
o   5.2 Career and work-related experiences.
o   5.3 Estyn - Quality assure remote and blended learning provision to ensure that all courses or programmes meet a minimum quality standard to reduce the variability in provision
o   5.4 Estyn - Share emerging and innovative remote and blended learning practice within and across post-16 sectors in Wales and beyond

## Leadership

**Promote Professional Learning opportunities for all:**
o   1.1 Strengthen the regional and CCC professional learning offer
o   1.2 Further support Leadership development at all levels, including national and local support programmes

**Address the recruitment crisis**

**Support schools with Financial management**
o   3.1 Consider the influence of the School Budget forum

**Strengthen Monitoring and Improvement planning at all levels of leadership**
o   4.1 Ensure that all schools causing concern achieve an effective rate of progress
o   4.2 Estyn -  Support schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their A level provision and develop targeted improvement plan

**Communication with schools and across the ECS department to ensure consistency of message.**
o   5.1 Ensure effective communication between the SFGs
o   5.2 Ensure school leaders inform the Strategic planning through the SFG groups and that they are informed of progress in general.
o   5.3 Address communication in general

**Further strengthen governance:**
- o 6.1 Strengthen the role of the clerks
- o 6.2 School Policies - Are all school policies relevant and in line with current procedures?

  **Support schools to develop a culture in line with the SLO principles** - cross cutting theme

## Wellbeing

- o Staff Wellbeing including training and recruitment of Health and Wellbeing
- o Promoting the whole-school mental and emotional health dynasty
- o Promoting the wellbeing and emotional resilience of young people and staff
- o Ensuring the grounding of the Health and Wellbeing Learning and Experience Area and Gender Education
- o Promoting the conscious awareness of trauma in our schools
- o Develop publicity initiatives on:
  - o Young people's use of social media
  - o Young people's use of Vapes
- o Review the well-being of young nursery and reception children
- o Developing the Food and Fun initiative (Food and Fun)
- o CCIE Advocacy (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants / ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants)

## SFG y Gymraeg

- o Drive forward with the implementation of the Welsh Language in Education Strategic Plan (CSGA) 2022-32
  - o Developing the CPD proposal around the CSGA
  - o Further explain the strategy to very few stakeholders
- o Linguistic categorisation of schools
- o Promoting the work of the Welsh Language Development Teacher Team
- o Developing the Use of Welsh in the Department for Education and Children
- o Attracting recruitment and retention of Welsh language cyfrwng staff
- o Manage and lead the Welsh for Adults service
- o Companion and second language standards in schools

## Sustainable Communities

- o Community Use of Schools - Produce Governor guidance
- o External Providers on School Premises - Consider Draft Process to be rolled out to Schools
- o Ensure further clarity on admissions process - Mid-Year Transfer data to be considered / Draft Fair Access Protocol to be produced
- o Waste Regulations - Understand implications and changes to waste recycling rules for schools

- School Catering and breakfast clubs - Undertake rapid review of Catering and Breakfast Club Service
- Schools Suitability Grades - Initiate programme of Suitability assessments for schools
- Update Modernisation programme to improve school buildings - Ensure that the MEP impacts positively on the effective distribution of resources in schools, leadership, provision, wellbeing, sustainability etc
- CEIC - Consider initiatives from CEIC experiences - Provide regular updates to the group
- Lettings - Produce Draft Lettings Policy for Schools
- UPFSM and Catering - Understand the impact of the project
- Explore funding for school repairs under pressure. - Understand the issue for schools
- School Kitchens and energy consumption. - Understand the additional cost being placed on schools
- FSM and Tackling Poverty – Understand Impact
- Breakfast supervisors - Revisit responsibility for Breakfast Club staff.
- Pentre Awel - Links with development scheme

## Safeguarding Children
- Continue to ensure schools and the LA meet their responsibilities and best practice as outlined in Keeping Learners Safe guidance

## Departmental Operations
- Communication and Consultation (in response to staff survey)
- Staff Induction and development
- MIS, Data and Support Systems
- Net Zero Carbon agenda
- SER support and actions

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