

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy

Ymchwil gymdeithasol
Social research

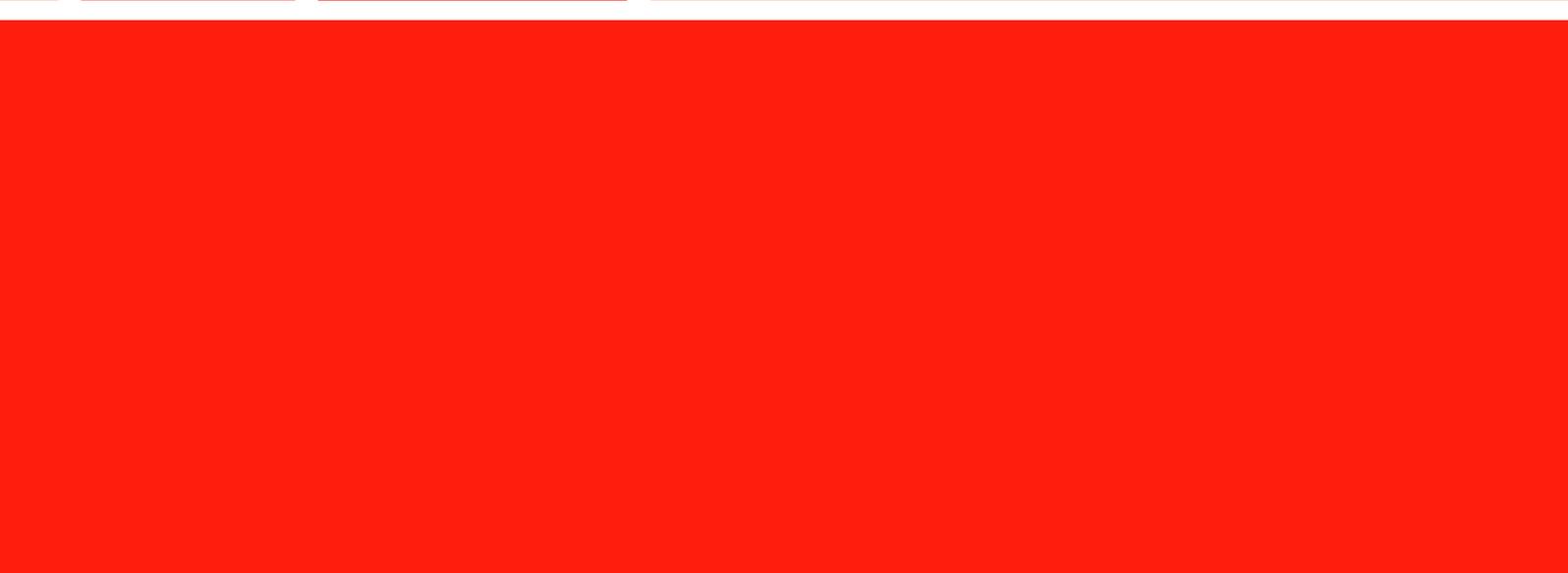
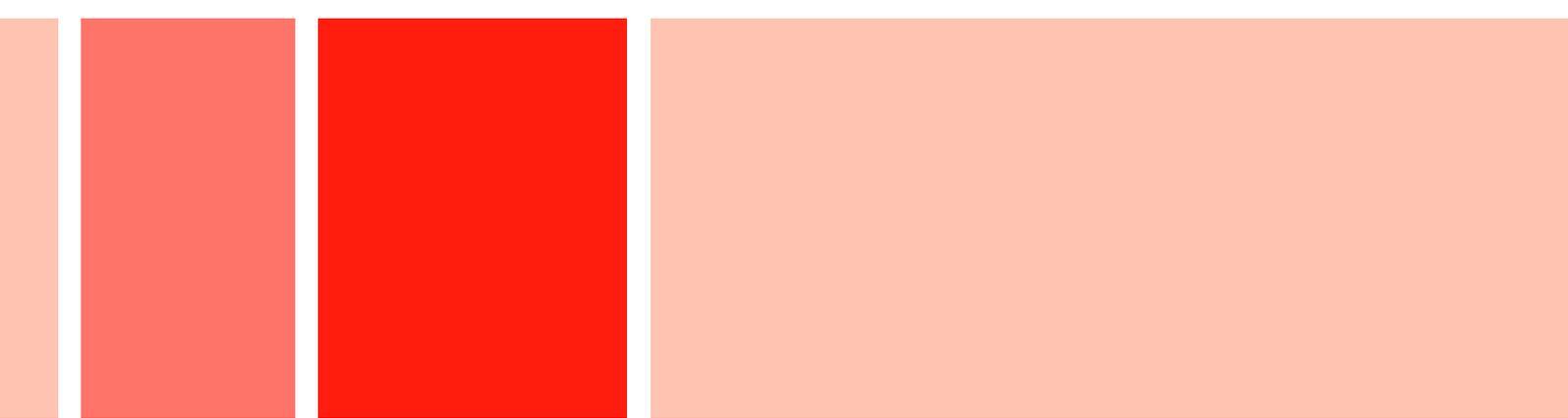
Number: 09/2010



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board Final Report



Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board

Final Report

BMG Research

Karen Kellard, Mary Costello and Philip Roe

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

For further information please contact:

Dr Iorwerth Griffiths

Social Research Division

Welsh Assembly Government

Sarn Mynach, Llandudno Junction, LL31 9RZ

Tel: 0300 062 5483

Email: iorwerth.griffiths@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Welsh Assembly Government Social Research, 2010

© Crown Copyright

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	14
2. Board structure, remit and responsibilities	19
3. Board operation.....	29
4. Changes in Denbighshire.....	34
5. Impacts/influences	39
6. Embedding and sustaining change	44
7. Overview – the Board as a recovery intervention.....	46
8. Overview and lessons learnt	53
References.....	59
Annex A Timeline of DIERB Activities	61
Annex B Board Terms of Reference.....	68
Annex C Board Members	70

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

DCC	Denbighshire County Council
DCELLS	Department for Children Education Lifelong Learning and Skills
DIERB	Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board
IERB	Independent Education Recovery Board
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
KS3	Key Stage 3
KS4	Key Stage 4
LEA	Local Education Authority
WAO	Wales Audit Office
WLGA	Welsh Local Government Association

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. In September 2007, an Independent Education Recovery Board was established by the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for the Department for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) to help to support Denbighshire County Council overcome shortcomings identified in its education system.
2. BMG Research was commissioned by DCELLS to evaluate the effectiveness of that Board. The formal aim of the evaluation was: to consider the extent to which the Board has been effective and whether or not the Board has contributed to the improvement of the Local Education Authority (LEA); and specifically to highlight any examples of good practice which could inform future interventions.
3. The more detailed objectives of the evaluation study thus focused on achieving an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Recovery Board model, a review of how the Board conducted its business and investigating key stakeholders' perceptions of the Board's work and its impact on the authority's recovery.

Background

4. Serious shortcomings in Denbighshire's education system were identified by two Estyn reports (in 2006 and 2007) and by a consultant's report commissioned by Denbighshire Local Education Authority (LEA) and published in September 2007. These shortcomings concerned inadequate leadership, focus, and planning within the LEA and a poor relationship between the LEA and schools in Denbighshire.
5. The Welsh Assembly Government Minister for the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills responded by stating, in September 2007, that Denbighshire's educational situation was

unacceptable. An Independent Education Recovery Board was established by the Minister in November 2007 to monitor Denbighshire's efforts to improve education services in Denbighshire to an acceptable level of quality. Its work would run alongside external support [from Estyn, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), and the Wales Audit Office (WAO)] and the internal efforts of the LEA (including the Authority's own internal Modernising Education Board).

6. The Board's Terms of Reference directed the Board's attention to Denbighshire's education problems, to scrutiny of action being taken by the LEA to overcome those problems, and to monitoring of the rate and scale of such progress towards recovery as occurred.
7. The Board met monthly between January and March 2008 and then, broadly, every two months until May 2010.
8. At Board meetings, the Board received updates on progress from senior management of the County Council and discussed draft policy papers and other documentation received from the Authority. External stakeholders (including Estyn, Welsh Local Government Association, headteacher representatives, school governor representatives, and Welsh Assembly Government statisticians) gave evidence and answered questions.
9. Outside Board meetings, members of the Board attended other meetings concerning the development of education in Denbighshire, including both internal LEA meetings (such as those of the Authority's Modernising Education Board) and those external to the Authority (such as headteacher meetings); and Board members held individual discussions with Denbighshire LEA officers on particular issues.

Board structure, remit, operations, and responsibilities

10. The evaluation study which is summarised here drew on a review of relevant documentation (such as its minutes and the papers presented

to it during its period of operation) and, more importantly, on the views of Board members, senior political and executive figures within the LEA, and other stakeholders including teachers, school governors, Estyn, WLGA, and others.

11. A first interest of the study was the adequacy of the Board itself and of the appropriateness of the task it was set.
12. There was wide agreement that the *Board's composition* was a key strength. It comprised individuals of high repute, professional status and with the breadth of expertise to 'mirror' the various functions of the LEA – there were no significant areas of the Authority's work on which the Board did not have an expert and experienced member.
13. The Board's *Terms of Reference* were also believed to be broadly appropriate. There were two caveats to this. Some Board members thought the Terms were too broad but careful chairing ensured that the necessary focus was maintained. There was some concern within the Authority that an extension to the Terms to encompass child safeguarding issues (which occurred) might take the Board into too-broad territory, but again, the necessary containment (to educational aspects of safeguarding) was managed and maintained by the Board in response to Authority concerns.
14. Similarly, the Board's *priorities* were generally accepted as appropriate. It was recognised that these were based on the Terms of Reference but also, as time passed, the Board had the flexibility to change the *emphasis* placed on particular priorities whilst still retaining scrutiny across the original issues and priorities.
15. *Procedurally*, the Board operated effectively although, as might be expected in any new process (particularly one directed to pressing and important matters), there were some stresses and strains especially in the early months of the Board as a mutual understanding of roles and

responsibilities was developed and the complexities of the context and circumstances were distilled.

16. On the positive side, the frequency of Board meetings was believed to be about right, and the greater engagement of Board members in external meetings and discussions as time passed was believed (both by the Board and the Authority) to be very valuable. The secretariat function delivered by DCELLS civil servants was viewed by the Board as both essential and well-performed. Stemming from the expertise and seniority of the Board members, relationships between the Board and the Authority (in a potentially fraught situation), and between the Board and external stakeholders, were good. Initial anxieties on the Authority side were dissipated and the Board was seen as professional, positive, and supportive. The ability of the Board to direct specific members to particular facets of the recovery process which matched those members' experience and expertise was a further strength.
17. Inevitably, some issues arose concerning Board operations and procedures. There were some views from outside the Board that an *independent secretariat* might have been valuable in reinforcing the Board's independence, though there was no suggestion that the DCELLS secretariat operated other than professionally and neutrally.
18. Authority staff had a *heavy workload* in preparing evidence for the Board, particularly given that the Board's agenda and the specific interests of particular meetings were often not known beforehand. However, this demand was also recognised as valuable in driving focus and teamwork within the Authority and generating momentum. Board members, too, were initially surprised by the unexpectedly high demands on their time.
19. *Estyn*, as an independent body, was not represented on the Board but attended meetings to provide information from its quarterly monitoring visits to the LEA which had been set up in response to Denbighshire's difficulties. This input was regarded as very important to Board

deliberations and assessments of progress. However, underlying this, concern was expressed by some respondents that the overall 'watching brief' of the Board was not sufficiently distinct from the statutory inspection function of Estyn.

20. There was some division of views as to the *period* over which the Board operated. The Board was initially expected to be wound up in February or March 2009. However, although very significant progress was apparent by then, the Minister was concerned about the sustainability of recovery and requested that the Board should continue for a further year. There was confidence within the Authority that recovery was embedded at that point and that further Board scrutiny was unnecessary.

Change in Denbighshire and Board impacts

21. Clearly, over the period in which the Board operated, there were very significant changes in Denbighshire's educational environment. There were staffing changes at the most senior political and executive levels of the Council. Additional posts directed at school improvement were created. The Authority's management team was restructured. An internal (to Denbighshire County Council) Modernising Education Board was established to drive change. Joint working, variously involving a Governors' Forum, school clusters, and education and social services was greatly increased. Additional funding was allocated to schools. Schools admission procedures were co-ordinated. Staff training in the LEA and at leadership and management level in schools was improved and the better use of management information by schools was stimulated.
22. Overall, there was a major change in the educational culture in Denbighshire with much greater emphasis of local public policy on education, better co-ordination and joint working, a better relationship between the LEA and schools, and better communications throughout.

23. From a low base, there has been improvement in pupil performance at Key Stages 1, 3 and 4, though, to date, improvement at Key Stage 2 remains below the expected level.
24. The question of the contribution of the Board to these changes cannot be measured. This is, of course, because there is no counterfactual circumstance in which a Recovery Board was not in place, to allow a comparison. Also, many other factors – including the County’s own political and staffing changes, the internal Modernising Education Board, Estyn, WAO, WLGA, and so on – were simultaneously in play.
25. What was widely recognised by all respondents was that the Board’s presence as the on-the-ground expression of Ministerial concern gave strong focus and impetus to the need for change and to the change process itself; and that the Board’s continuous pressure by virtue of regular meetings, report-back requirements, action plan scrutiny, and so on, gave further momentum to recovery. One Board member commented that it was ‘just the fact that we were there, probing, asking questions, challenging, keeping Denbighshire focussed... that’s the impact’.
26. In addition, more specific impacts were also asserted, such as:
 - the Board encouraged the LEA’s Partnership Agreement to focus more strongly on schools’ contribution to improvement;
 - better relationships between education and social services were encouraged, particularly by an additional Board appointment with specialist knowledge;
 - the Board’s recognition of insufficient management and leadership training for governors and senior management in schools was reinforced by new senior management in the LEA itself; and
 - the Board encouraged the development of better structures and communication to improve the historically-poor relationship between the LEA and schools.

27. Although, as above, there was a division of opinion about the appropriate end date for the Board intervention and a feeling (by some respondents) that the lack of a defined exit strategy for the Board was an area of weakness, by May 2010 the Minister was able to revoke the direction to Denbighshire County Council to co-operate with the Board and to indicate that no further meetings were necessary.

Value for money, alternative approaches and transferability of the model: evaluation

28. The total cost of the Board's operations over two years was between £80,000 and £100,000 (depending on how indirect costs are accounted). There is no formal benchmark for this cost given that the Recovery Board has no direct parallels. However, if it is accepted that the Board had a significant, if by no means the only, role in Denbighshire's recovery, then, intuitively, this appears to represent good value for money. Whilst, as noted, there is no 'counterfactual', the cost of *not* having the intervention, both financially and in terms of children's education and longer term life chances, was potentially far greater.
29. A related question of whether alternative approaches might have been applied was also raised in discussions with respondents. One alternative might have been to do nothing and let Denbighshire seek to resolve its problems alone. This was regarded as a theoretical option only, reflecting a general consensus among respondents that the severity of Denbighshire's difficulties were such as to demand a central government response.
30. Two other alternatives, to bring in an external management consultancy or a neighbouring LEA to take control, were also not believed to have been viable or desirable. Various, cost, lack of local knowledge, the short-term nature of such interventions, and lack of capacity and organisational barriers (in the 'neighbouring LEA' case) were cited as obstacles. Generally, it was felt that these kinds of intervention which 'did to' the education system rather than encouraged the system to get

itself back on track were weaker and less sustainable than the Board model.

31. As noted above, for some actors in the recovery process, there was a lack of absolute clarity as to the distinction between the roles of the Board and Estyn. A further alternative might be for Estyn to operate a similar process to the Recovery Board – for Estyn, in effect, to operate as a ‘standing Board’ to be brought into play in particularly difficult educational circumstances. However, this would require quite a fundamental change to Estyn’s remit and Estyn was certainly not structured to undertake the Recovery Board role in the Denbighshire case.
32. Finally, a Recovery Board with *executive powers* could have been established. However, it was felt: (1) that the actual model with its direct reporting line to the Minister was sufficient to have triggered stronger direct intervention should that have been needed; (2) should the Board have been given power then that could have negatively affected the relationship between the Board and the Authority; and (3) it would have *fundamentally* changed the character of the actual intervention - basically from one which monitored the actions of the LEA to one in which it became an active agent of improvement, taking a share in the responsibility for that happening or not.
33. Overall, therefore, it seems that, in Denbighshire’s case, the best solution, and a cost-effective one, was found.
34. The further question arises as to whether the Recovery Board model, given this success in Denbighshire, is transferrable. The model has been used in England but there is little evidence as to its impact there. It had not previously been used in Wales. There is, therefore, little evidence to answer this question beyond that produced in this study. There is no evident reason why it should not be effective elsewhere in Wales but it seems likely that to be successful the model needs to comply with

certain conditions for its application and context. These are discussed below.

Lessons learned

35. The effectiveness of the Recovery Board model depends on a number of features. Most of these were sufficiently 'in place' in the Denbighshire case to ensure that the Board was effective, but, in some cases, the Denbighshire experience offers lessons for future application of the Board model. Important features of good practice to note are:

- that the Board is composed of *credible individuals* of high standing; and that the Board has the variety of expertise to address the range of functions and issues which are likely to arise;
- that the Board is *independent*;
- that Board Members are forewarned as regards the likely *commitment* required. In the Denbighshire case, some members, particularly in the early intensive phase, found it difficult to find the actual time commitment which arose;
- that there is clarity as to the *lifespan of, and exit strategy* for, the Board. This may be somewhat difficult. In the Denbighshire case, the County Council were somewhat concerned that the original period of operation was extended. From the Ministerial side, the need was for the Board to carry on until sustained recovery was assured. This, by definition, could not be pre-defined. The Terms of Reference directed the Board to continue until Estyn re-inspection, followed by Ministerial decision then as to Board continuance or otherwise. This may have been taken by the County to mean that evidence of significant progress would lead to Board dissolution. In comparable cases, it might be helpful to state explicitly what was actually the case in Denbighshire – that the sustainability of improvement, not just improvement itself, had to be demonstrated and this may require a longer scrutiny period;

- that the *role of the Board* should be wholly clear. In the Denbighshire case, the Minister was clear that the role of the Board was to provide feedback on progress and advice to the Minister. Estyn would provide feedback from monitoring visits but not advice. However, on the ground, the Board's role and its distinction from that of Estyn was not fully understood. Clearly, by its presence alone, the Board was a stimulus to change and gave impetus to the recovery process; but in some specific instances (as above), the Board used its expertise and experience to encourage the Authority in certain directions. The boundary between monitoring of, and engagement with, the recovery process was, perhaps, not always maintained. And not all actors in the recovery process were convinced that the roles of the Board and Estyn were clearly different or differentiated;
- that there should be *flexibility* in Terms of Reference (albeit that subsequent variation needs approval at Ministerial level). In the Denbighshire case, there may have been some advantage in variation to reflect emerging issues and changing priorities;
- that there is an *intensive 'early learning' period* to get the Board up to speed on the environment and the issues which it will be examining. In the Denbighshire case, it appeared that the familiarisation process was somewhat ad hoc. Recognising the need for an early, intensive immersion as a structural part of Board operations would be valuable;
- similarly, that there is formal recognition at the outset that successful Board operations are unlikely to be constrained to formal Board meetings. In Denbighshire's case, the Terms of Reference make explicit reference to the nature of Board meetings. In practice, these meetings were supported by a whole range of other meetings and discussions, essential for the Board's performance of its scrutiny task. As this less formal engagement with various groups and individuals was not contained in the Terms of Reference this may have contributed to some lack of clarity, as above, about the Board's role.

Evaluation: conclusion

36. Although the Board's explicit role in its Terms of Reference was 'to report to and advise the Minister in relation to the performance of the whole of Denbighshire's education service', its additional effect, inevitably, was to apply significant pressure on the recovery process in Denbighshire. Its detailed scrutiny ensured that, should there have been any tendency to lack of impetus or lack of focus on urgent priorities, at the level of the County's new political and executive leadership or below, then that tendency was eliminated.
37. Although there was, on the ground, some lack of clarity in respect of the Board's function, lifespan, and operations (as alluded to above). This was, perhaps, inevitable in so far as a new model for remedying a difficult situation was being applied for the first time in Wales and was, in any case, mostly marginal in respect of the Board's overall effectiveness and impact.
38. Whilst the recovery process was, in fact, successful, had this not been the case the Board's reporting back to the Minister would have made this evident – perhaps, more quickly and more clearly than would otherwise have been the case – and allowed early application of other measures. The Board, therefore, had an important 'backstop' function, though one which, in practice, it did not need to exercise.
39. The Board's impacts were achieved at relatively low cost and in a way which preserved the integrity and sustainability of a Local Education Authority.
40. The Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board was, therefore, a successful intervention which, with due regard to the matters raised above, is likely to be a valuable approach to the remedy of other instances of under-performance by public services in Wales and beyond.

1. Introduction

Context

1.1. A series of reports in 2006 and 2007 identified that education services in Denbighshire had shortcomings in important areas:

- an Estyn Inspection Report of Youth Support Services in 2006 identified shortcomings in leadership and strategic management (Estyn, 2006);
- an Estyn Inspection Report of the Local Education Authority in July 2007 reported numerous similar failures, including ineffective leadership and planning and lack of focus on priorities and actions to raise standards (Estyn, 2007);
- the Authority commissioned a consultancy, Cambridge Education, to identify how to improve the standard of education in the County (Cambridge Education Ltd, 2007). Their report entitled 'Modernising Education' was published in September 2007 concluded that:
 - the LEA operated in an outdated and uncoordinated way;
 - there was a need for more strategic planning; and
 - that the LEA needed to improve its relationship with schools in Denbighshire.

1.2. The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Jane Hutt AM, said, in a statement in September 2007, that:

'Denbighshire's performance is unacceptable. Learners throughout Wales are entitled to high-quality services, and schools are entitled to support, and, where appropriate, to expect challenge from their local authorities. Effective education services are vital to the wellbeing and future prospects of our children and young people. Far too many young people in Denbighshire are absent from school, underachieving and

leaving school without any qualifications. Things have to change in Denbighshire and the Assembly Government has to ensure that that happens.'

1.3. In November 2007, having considered and rejected other approaches, the Minister announced that an *Independent Education Recovery Board (IERB)* would be established (BBC, 2007) to drive the administration and delivery of education in Denbighshire upwards to an acceptable level. This support was to run alongside other sources of support and ongoing activities, which included:

- regular reviews from Estyn;
- support from WLGA, which included a small team from WLGA working alongside officials in Denbighshire to help them 'on the ground' to raise their capacity;
- Wales Audit Office support – the public service watchdog for Wales' with a focus on promoting improvement to ensure that public services are accountable and well-managed. Through inspection, the WAO had already identified serious weaknesses in corporate governance in the Authority (WAO, 2008); and
- Denbighshire's own activities, including the internal Modernising Education Board.

1.4. In the Board's Terms of Reference (see Annex B for full version), the Minister identified three key areas to which the Board should pay particular attention:

- i) progress on the action plan prepared by Denbighshire in response to Estyn's inspection of the education service and the action plan for the 2006 Estyn inspection of Youth Support Services (and any amendments to those plans as may be approved by Estyn);
- ii) progress on weaknesses and opportunities identified by the Cambridge Education report commissioned by Denbighshire; and

- iii) progress on reviewing provision of school places, including 16-19 provision.

1.5. The Board ran until May 2010, when its scrutiny role was deemed no longer necessary. The Final Report from the Board concluded that

‘Denbighshire now has the leadership, structures, determination and capacity to sustain its improvement programme’ and that ‘under the current regime there is little danger of the LEA slipping back into the ‘failing’ category’ (IERB, 2010).

Overview of Recovery Board Activities

1.6. The Board was directed to meet in private once a month for the period January to March 2008, and then to decide its own meeting frequency – in practice, it met broadly once every two months. At each meeting, the Board received updates from the Leader of the County Council (who also held the Education portfolio), the Chief Executive, the Directors of Lifelong Learning and Social Services, and other senior officers of Denbighshire County Council on the progress of their action plans. Members received and discussed draft policy papers and other relevant documentation from the Authority.

1.7. Other key stakeholders – such as Estyn, WLGA, headteacher representatives, Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors’ Forum, the Authority’s School Improvement Officers and Welsh Assembly Government Statisticians – also attended to give evidence and answer questions at its meetings.

1.8. Members of the Board also attended key meetings within the LEA and beyond. These included meetings of the Modernising Education Board, the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee, the Governors’ Forum, headteacher cluster groups, the School Standards Monitoring Group, the

Joint Education/Social Services Management Group, and the Youth Forum, and attendance at Estyn quarterly monitoring visit feedback sessions. In addition, Board Members met with relevant Denbighshire officers on finance, modernising education policies and school performance for more in-depth discussions.

Timeline

1.9. The first meeting of the Board was held on the 31 January 2008 and the final meeting was held in March 2010.

Research aim and objectives

1.10. The formal aim of the evaluation reported here was: to consider the extent to which the Board has been effective and whether or not the Board has contributed to the improvement of the LEA, and specifically to highlight any examples of good practice which could inform future interventions.

1.11. The more detailed objectives of the evaluation study thus focused on achieving an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Recovery Board model, a review of how the Board conducted its business and investigating key stakeholders' perceptions of the Board's work and its impact on the authority's recovery.

Research methodology

1.12. Addressing these aims and objectives required obtaining and synthesising the views of a wide range of actors in the recovery process – Board members, political and executive post-holders within the LEA and other stakeholders. These views were obtained in a series of qualitative discussions which were structured according to a discussion guide. Discussions were digitally recorded (with consent) and evidence from the recordings was synthesised into a thematic analysis framework.

- 1.13. The interpretation and analysis of the qualitative data was conducted using a data-mapping thematic grid. The key themes for the analysis framework were developed from the topic guide and from an initial review of interviews. Once the analysis framework was agreed among the research team, each theme was translated to a column heading in a grid (created in Excel). Each row within the grid represented a 'case' (that is, an individual). Data from each interview was extracted and summarised for input into a specific cell within the grid. The result was a series of populated tables representing all of the interviews – so that the analyst can read across a row to see individuals' views and down a column for a thematic perspective. Direct quotations have also been used in the report to help to illustrate a point made or respondent perspective.
- 1.14. In advance of the qualitative consultation phase, the research team also conducted a documentary review of relevant papers, documents and data reports (Board meeting minutes, Chair's reports, action plans, Estyn reports and so forth). This provided a sequential description of the formation and subsequent operations of the Board to provide the full context for the research. This is presented in Annex A.
- 1.15. On the central question – the extent to which the Board contributed to recovery – evaluation requires arbitration of mixed and sometimes conflicting opinions and views and where relevant the evidence presented in this report includes the consideration of the range of views, balanced by fact where known. Not all stakeholders in Denbighshire's recovery will share the overall conclusions of the evaluation but trust that they will recognise, from the evidence set out, how they were reached.

2. Board structure, remit and responsibilities

2.1. This section describes the Board's membership, remit and responsibilities and provides an overview of perspectives on each of these.

Membership

2.2. Initially the Board comprised seven members, including the Chair. Members were selected by the Minister, with guidance from Welsh Assembly Government officials and WLGA. Members of the Board were selected on the basis of their individual reputation and professionalism as well as their area of expertise and knowledge which covered:

- education;
- schools inspections;
- school standards and improvement;
- regulatory work;
- scrutiny and performance;
- local government;
- management and leadership; and
- children, young people and youth services.

Full details of the Board's membership are provided at Annex C.

2.3. Following concerns that emerged in the first year of the Board's operation regarding the interface between education and social services (highlighted particularly by the sudden closure of Hyfrydle Residential Unit – see below) as well as specific concerns about youth services (also flagged in an Estyn inspection report – Estyn, 2006), the Board felt that they lacked specific expertise in the areas of children's social services and youth services. These concerns were raised via the secretariat, and Department of Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

(DCELLS) officials identified and invited two additional members of the Board with specific expertise in these areas. This brought the total number of Board members to nine. The Board composition then remained unchanged until it concluded its work.

- 2.4. The high level of expertise and experience of individual Board members was identified by all respondents throughout as being a critical strength of the Board in enabling it to be viewed as having the credibility and gravitas required in undertaking its remit. It was felt that the range of functions performed by officers within the Authority and the challenges faced were well understood by the Board because members had a wide range of corresponding experience; and that there was a good balance between current practitioners (particularly headteachers) and retired/semi-retired experts.
- 2.5. This latter point, achieving an appropriate balance between current practitioners and retired/semi-retired experts was reported as being essential by most respondents (and particularly by Board members themselves) in ensuring that the Board could demonstrate and reflect knowledge of up-to-date and recent LEA practices alongside long-term experience of working with a wide range of authorities and stakeholders. As above, it was generally felt that this had been achieved, although the view was expressed by one respondent that additional representation from former directors of education would have been valuable in introducing more LEA leadership experience onto the Board.

Terms of reference

- 2.6. The Terms of Reference (Annex B) for the Board outlined its responsibilities in terms of advising and reporting to the Minister about the performance of Denbighshire County Council's education service. In summary, the Board was to pay particular attention to:

- progress on the action plans prepared by Denbighshire in response to Estyn's education inspection report of 2007, and of youth services in 2006 (Estyn 2006 and 2007);
- progress on weaknesses and opportunities identified by the Cambridge Education Limited report (commissioned by Denbighshire County Council) (Cambridge Education Limited, 2007); and
- progress on reviewing provision of school places.

2.7. Board members generally found the Terms of Reference to be appropriate in underpinning its activities, and that, in the main they provided a clear basis for the Board to operate. Some Board members also advised that there were initially some concerns that the Terms of Reference were possibly too broad, but careful leadership and direction by the Chair ensured that that there was a sufficiently sharp focus on issues being discussed and scrutinised.

2.8. The expansion of the Terms of Reference to encompass safeguarding issues (that is, ensuring that the Board scrutinised issues relating to planning, to delivery of services related to vulnerable children and young peoples' care and well-being in educational settings, as well as to educational attainment) was generally felt to have been appropriate. However, there were some concerns, particularly from the Authority, that the reasons for this extension to the Terms of Reference were not explained or communicated clearly enough to the Authority, with some concerns that there was a risk of 'mission creep' at this stage. Nevertheless, it was reported that the Board did manage this addition to the Terms of Reference and ensured that the focus was on educational aspects to safeguarding. This was achieved by the Authority being able to discuss their concerns with the Board, and by the Authority demonstrating how they were responding to safeguarding issues.

Activities

Meetings

- 2.9. For the first three months of its operation, the Board met on a monthly basis to allow members to familiarise themselves with the background and to get 'up to speed' with the main issues. After this, the Board met on a bi-monthly basis, meeting a total of 15 times between February 2008 and March 2010. Meetings were held at the Welsh Assembly Government offices in St Asaph, Denbighshire and generally lasted a full day.
- 2.10. Prior to each meeting, Board members would receive for review any draft policy papers, action plans and other relevant documentation from the authority. Board members estimated that at least half a day's preparation was needed to review such documents.
- 2.11. Board members advised that, as time went on, there was more interaction with the Authority prior to meetings. The day before a meeting was generally being used as an opportunity to meet with key individuals at the Authority and observe meetings. This was felt to be an effective use of time and a positive development in the Board's operations.
- 2.12. At each Board meeting, the Leader of Denbighshire County Council, the Chief Executive, directors and other senior officers would also attend for part of the meeting. The Leader and directors would provide a progress update and officers would also provide updates of activities in specific areas, for example school improvement and safeguarding. Staff in the Authority stated that they did not know what was on the agenda for each meeting, so they prepared evidence on a range of issues that they felt the Board would want to explore. Although this was described as being very hard work and time consuming, it was also reported to be a very good way to focus as a team on a range of issues and provided the

Authority with timeframes to work towards in ensuring that they had a robust set of evidence to present.

2.13. Estyn was not represented on the Board, due to its role as the independent inspectorate. However the inspector responsible for Denbighshire LEA did attend Board meetings where these followed an Estyn monitoring visit to provide updates. Estyn's presence at these Board Meetings was identified as being very important in ensuring that all key issues were being considered during the meeting and that the Board's recommendations complemented and built upon those of Estyn.

Scrutiny role

2.14. Respondents universally recognised the immense amount of work that the Authority needed to undertake to move forward from the 2007 Estyn inspection. Additionally the Authority was undergoing significant changes internally both at a political level and at an operational level with key personnel changing post, particularly in the Education Directorate. There was wide uncertainty as to whether the changes occurring within the Authority were going to lead to stable and sustained improvement. An independent scrutiny role by the Board, reviewing and challenging plans and operational activities being undertaken by the Authority, was felt to have been vital by Board members and DCELLS representatives. The Authority itself perhaps felt more confident, as time passed, that the changes being made were effective and sustainable (due to the systems and procedures that were being implemented and closely monitored across the Directorate to ensure that issues were continuously addressed). However, it was felt generally, by both Board members and those in the Authority, that the Board was successful in fulfilling its scrutiny role through rigorous review of evidence and questioning of the Authority at Board meetings to ensure that sustained progress was indeed being made.

2.15. Respondents from the Authority advised that, although the Board was challenging and asked very pertinent questions, its level of scrutiny

(perhaps beyond the initial view months) was not as arduous as it could have been in comparison to their experiences of other scrutiny processes. But it was still a very robust process in ensuring answers to questions on a wide range of issues.

Setting priorities

2.16. There was a general agreement from all respondents that the Estyn Inspection Report (2007) and the Cambridge Education Modernising Education Report commissioned by Denbighshire had highlighted the key issues, notably:

- management and leadership;
- school improvement;
- management of allocation of school places; and
- Youth Support Services.

2.17. These were reflected in the Terms of Reference for the Board. There was a general agreement from the Board that these were the correct priorities on which to focus – and Denbighshire itself also recognised this.

2.18. During the first year of operation, it became clear to the Board that there were issues regarding the relations between education and social services in Denbighshire, which was felt important to reflect in the Board's remit because of how it affected education provision.

2.19. In particular, the Board's attention was drawn to the situation at Hyfrydle Residential Unit at Ysgol Plas Bron Dyffryn, which provided residential care for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The authority decided to close the Unit in July 2008, since the Unit only had two residents, despite being registered to accommodate six. Officers at Denbighshire were projecting a running cost deficit of well in excess of £0.5 million by the end of the 2008/09 financial year. The announcement

that the Unit was set to close caused local disquiet since the timing of the decision left little time to work with the children and families most directly affected. Estyn, and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales were requested to undertake a joint review of the closure process. It was at this point the Board was alerted as it became clear that this had important implications for the interface between social services and education. This was because there was evidence to indicate that a contributory factor to the closure had been poor leadership and management within Denbighshire as well as poor partnership working (Rowett et al, 2008). It was felt by the Board, therefore, that this should be included in their scrutiny remit.

2.20. When all respondents' perceptions of how the Board's priorities had been set were explored, most stated that these had been underpinned by the Estyn Inspection Report (2007) and subsequent monitoring reports along with findings and recommendations from the Cambridge Education Report. However, it was felt by Board members that priorities evolved and developed over time as the Authority made progress and to reflect areas of need. For example, in the initial stages, the Board focused on issues around standards and leadership and management, whereas, later, issues around the closure of Hyfrydle and working arrangements between the education and social services directorates became a stronger priority. Towards the end of the life of the Board, more priority was given to the sustainability of improvement and embedding change. However, Board members reported that although the emphasis changed, the basic set of priorities was maintained throughout the Board's lifetime, with each meeting going through relevant areas to ensure that nothing was overlooked.

Board support

2.21. Secretariat and administrative support was provided to the Board by officers within DCELLS. This support included scheduling and clerking of meetings, collation and distribution of papers and documentation and assistance in preparation of the reports to the Minister as well as advice

and information on more complex policy issues. This support was viewed by Board members as essential in ensuring that they were able to access necessary background materials and obtain further clarification on issues as needed.

2.22. DCELLS' role in supporting the Board was reported by Board members to have mainly been very good. The officers involved with the Board were highly experienced and knowledgeable about educational matters both at a national and a local level and were therefore able to provide up-to-date information and clarification where the Board required this.

2.23. It was generally felt by all that DCELLS retained a good distance from the discussions and operations of the Board thus ensuring its neutrality, although a minority of respondents outside of the board recommended that a neutral secretariat separate to DCELLS may have been more appropriate in making clear that the Board was entirely independent. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that, in practice, the secretariat operated other than in a neutral and unbiased manner at any time.

Responsibilities within the Board

2.24. The composition of the Board, in terms of individual areas of expertise, meant that allocating responsibilities was relatively straightforward as they were able to effectively 'mirror' the responsibilities of key individuals within Denbighshire (for example, education, school standards, youth services, social services, school leadership etc). This, it appears, worked well in terms of fostering professional dialogue and because of this there appeared to be a mutual respect and understanding of roles from both Board and Denbighshire perspectives.

2.25. As time progressed, Board members sought to make links with key individuals and teams within the Authority beyond the scope of the formal meetings. This was to establish ongoing dialogue and to arrange opportunities to attend meetings and discussions that were going on in

the Authority (for example, attending the Modernising Education Board or safeguarding meetings). This was a particularly effective way of ensuring that the Board was able to keep up with development and progress, and to provide support or guidance if appropriate. It also gave external stakeholders the opportunity to feed into the process outside of the bi-monthly Board meetings.

2.26. Board members with experience of school improvement took on an active role in reviewing Denbighshire's pupil achievement monitoring data and discussing with staff at the Authority how this could be improved. Similarly, Board members with safeguarding and youth support experience provided input to discussions regarding policy developments and procedures in these areas within the Authority. This 'supportive' aspect of Board members' activities evolved over time and it appears that Board members had differing areas of input at this level. For example, some Board members were more active in attending Authority meetings than others, but this was mainly due to Board members ensuring that they were only involved in Authority activities where they had particular expertise, such as pupil achievement data or funding streams for youth support provision.

Perceptions of the Board

2.27. The Board was generally viewed with respect by the Authority and stakeholders mainly due to the expertise and experience of the individual Board members. Although most respondents recognised that the Board did not have any actual mandate or power, they did perceive it as having a significant level of influence and authority through its reporting role to the Minister and they were continually mindful of this.

2.28. Relations between the Board and Denbighshire were also discussed with respondents. Respondents from the Authority described how there was a sense of 'wariness' of the Board and displeasure at the initial stages of operation in having had such an intervention imposed upon them. This view was echoed by Board members, who discussed how

this was an understandable and natural reaction since Denbighshire was in challenging circumstances. The Board, under the clear direction of the Chair, demonstrated early on in the process their understanding of this by making it clear that they were there to support the Authority in whatever way they could. Additionally, this was the first time in Wales that a Board had been established to oversee an LEA's improvement, so there was a great deal of uncertainty about how its presence would impact on the Authority.

2.29. This uncertainty was felt to have been a natural response, however, since having the Board in place made Denbighshire stand out from other authorities in an unfavourable way and added to the pressure it was experiencing due to the Estyn inspection, further raising the profile of a poorly performing LEA. However, most respondents advised that, as time passed, relations between the Authority and the Board developed positively with mutual trust and respect being established both ways – largely through the professional approach taken both by the Board and the Authority. These relations were enhanced by the Board undertaking a more 'hands on' approach by visiting the Authority and undertaking discussions with stakeholders, senior officers and directors; and by the Authority being fully co-operative at all times.

2.30. There were a range of perceptions of how the Board's role fitted in with the other scrutiny and monitoring activities that were also in place – WAO, Estyn and WLGA. Most reported that the Board provided a valuable ongoing role in ensuring that there was a 'watching brief' on the Authority's progress towards, and performance in, improving the quality of its services. However, some respondents questioned whether its role was distinct enough from that of Estyn, in that both the Board and the Inspectorate scrutinised the Authority's progress towards improving standards and examined how the Authority's leadership team was implementing and monitoring interventions to improve performance.

3. Board operation

3.1. In this section, the operation of the Board is described and discussed.

Meetings and dialogue

3.2. Once the Board was established, it met every two months, usually at the Welsh Assembly Government offices in St Asaph, Denbighshire.

3.3. It was agreed by the Board at the outset that activities should not be limited to attendance at bi-monthly meetings but that Board members should seek to attend other Denbighshire activities and be involved in dialogue with officers outside of the Board meetings. Examples of such activities include:

- Attendance at:
 - Scrutiny Committee meetings;
 - Governors' Forum;
 - Cluster meetings;
 - School Budget Forum;
 - Safeguarding Children Board meetings;
 - School Standards Monitoring Group; and
 - Cross authority meetings.
- Discussions with:
 - Local Authority officers;
 - Councillors;
 - Headteachers; and
 - School Governors.

3.4. Involvement of individual Board members in such activities tended to be by those with specific knowledge or expertise in that area. So, for example, a Board member with previous experience as a Headteacher would attend a Headteacher cluster group meeting, whereas those with

senior Local Authority officer experience would attend the School Budget Forum and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

Activities

- 3.5. Initially, during its meetings, the Board focused on undertaking its scrutiny role by reviewing documentation and by questioning representatives from the Authority and stakeholders such as Estyn. It was reported that a lot of time was required in the early stages of the Board by members to assimilate and understand all the issues and background evidence. This initial focus on activities was felt to be appropriate and necessary by Board members since there was a great deal of evidence to review so that the Board could be best placed to challenge and scrutinise the Authority from an informed position. Concern was expressed by a minority of respondents from all stakeholder groups outside of the Board that, at this stage, the Board was simply replicating Estyn's role in monitoring the Authority's progress towards the targets set in the action plan since it was difficult to identify how the Board was adding value.
- 3.6. However, as time progressed, the Board became more active in attending meetings and discussions across the Authority. This gave Board members the opportunity to observe how processes and procedures were being introduced whilst also providing an opportunity to question how these were being implemented and what outcomes were being achieved or anticipated. This direct observational and 'probing' approach with members of the Board interacting with the Authority was welcomed positively by both Board members and Authority officers.
- 3.7. Board members discussed how being able to visit the Authority and view its activities provided them with a greater insight and appreciation of how the Authority was working, whilst also enabling them to engage in dialogue with different stakeholders within the Authority. The Authority was also positive about Board members attending meetings and undertaking discussions outside of the main Board meeting, and

welcomed these opportunities as a chance to test and explore ideas. This aspect of the Board's activities evolved as time progressed and to some extent alleviated concern expressed that the Board was simply replicating Estyn's role. However, since these activities were not specified in the Terms of Reference but had evolved, there were instances where it was felt that Board members were unclear whether they could intervene or contribute to the meetings they attended and they generally sought views from the Authority as to whether they could speak up. Nevertheless most Board members and the Authority's officers felt that this activity was of value and engendered a sense of working together towards a common goal.

Gaps in activities

- 3.8. Most respondents advised that the Board undertook a comprehensive range of activities that were in line with the Terms of Reference and the Board's remit. There were however some aspects of the Board's activities that were felt by all groups of stakeholders, but particularly those from the Authority, to have had potential for broadening and developing. It was felt by some Authority stakeholders that the Board could have played a more supportive role to the Authority in advising and guiding it towards its action plan. There was some debate as to the extent to which the Board could provide 'support' as its primary functions were to provide challenge and scrutiny, but it was felt that the Board did require an added dimension to do this since the Authority was being challenged by WAO and Estyn as well as the Board.
- 3.9. The fact that the Authority was receiving focused attention and scrutiny from bodies such as Estyn and WAO as well as DCELLS, WLGA and the Board, meant that officers in the council felt under considerable pressure to provide evidence, data and documentation to these stakeholders whilst also working to fulfil their day to day responsibilities within the LEA. This was described as a time of great pressure and the Authority sometimes felt that it was duplicating effort in responding to requests from these many sources, although the Authority always

complied fully and co-operatively with any request it received. It was, therefore, felt that the Board could have played a role in co-ordinating the requirements of these stakeholders to ensure that the maximum capacity was being directed by the Authority towards improving education as well as administering and servicing requests for data and attendance at meetings.

Relationships with stakeholders

3.10. The Board's relationship with Authority officers and members and the other key stakeholders – governors, school staff, Estyn, WLGA and so forth – were said to be good by all concerned. The Board itself reported positive relationships and felt that they worked well with those with which they came into contact. Outside of the Board, the view was that the relationships were viewed as 'fair', 'amicable', 'professional' and 'supportive'. At the start there was perhaps some anxiety as to how the Board would work with the Authority's staff and others and what role they would take. In practice the relationship became 'positive' and 'progressive' with a good level of openness and shared understanding as to the importance of helping the Authority in its recovery.

3.11. The extent to which the Board's role was distinct from that of Estyn's was debated by respondents from all stakeholder groups. Among a minority of respondents across the Authority and wider stakeholders it was felt that the Board was duplicating Estyn's role in providing scrutiny and challenge about the Authority's performance and that the Board was not always 'in sync' with the activities of Estyn – particularly in terms of reporting frequency and timing. Furthermore, it was also felt that the Board could not be seen to be providing recommendations or observations that were counter to Estyn's findings since Estyn has a legislative mandate as an independent body. Most Board members reported that the Board's role complemented that of Estyn, in that it was able to have an ongoing dialogue with the Authority and seek to explore issues identified by Estyn from a different perspective and challenge the Authority as to how it was working towards its Action Plan.

4. Changes in Denbighshire

4.1. This section outlines the areas of change in Denbighshire since the establishment of the Board in February 2008. Evidence is drawn from qualitative stakeholder discussions as well as from published Estyn and Board reports. As well as the specific changes outlined below, there was a sense that overall processes and procedures had improved – for example in monitoring data, in the way meetings were run and in professional dialogue between colleagues from across the Authority.

Organisational and staffing changes in Denbighshire

4.2. As indicated in earlier parts of this report, there were a number of key staffing changes in senior management and leadership posts within the Authority including:

- the Leader of the Council (who also took on responsibility for education);
- the Chief Executive of the Authority;
- Corporate Director of Lifelong Learning and Education;
- Head of School Improvement and Inclusion;
- a change in the chair of the Scrutiny Committee; and
- Head of Leisure and Youth Support Services.

4.3. Additional posts were created, including further school improvement officers, and more focused job roles for these officers were defined in order to maximise their schools work.

4.4. The overall management team within the authority was restructured.

4.5. The internal Modernising Education Board (MEB) was established by the Authority, as a high level board to drive through change. It was attended by the Chief Executive, Council Leader and other senior managers from

the Authority. The MEB ensured that its monthly reports were received by the recovery board.

Joint Working

- 4.6. The Governors' Forum has been re-established with positive exchanges of information and views between link officers from the Authority and chairs of governing bodies, which had contributed to improved relations between schools and the authority.
- 4.7. There is evidence of increased and improved cluster group working between schools which has encouraged better and more open communication between schools and the Authority.
- 4.8. One area of focus by the Authority and highlighted by the Board, was to encourage greater self-improvement and self-management in schools. According to Board members, whilst there was some improvement here, it was felt that there was still some way to go to supporting schools to take on more responsibility for their own improvement.
- 4.9. There have been improvements in co-operation and joint working between Education and Social Services, with closer working relationships between Directorates and joint team meetings when appropriate.

Funding

- 4.10. Additional funding has been allocated by the Authority to schools to improve performance – particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as funding to cover school improvement and raising standards.

Schools

4.11. Schools admissions and the provision of school places had previously been a concern as, historically, admissions had been handled by individual schools with no co-ordination at the Authority level. The Authority is now included in this process. The issue of the provision of school places (in particular Welsh medium provision, faith provision, and sixth form provision) is still ongoing.

4.12. From a point of no significant trend in overall results within Denbighshire, with an actual downward trend at GCSE level, there has been some improvement in pupil performance on some indicators at KS1, KS3 and KS4, with a demonstrable upward trend. However, improvement has been (to date) below what might be expected at KS2 level¹ (Estyn, 2010).

Training and development

4.13. Training and development in the Authority has improved, with the introduction of an enhanced programme of training for senior management and leadership in schools, and a renewed emphasis on continuing professional development for teachers in the county.

4.14. Performance review within the authority has also been significantly improved, with reviews now taking place on a regular basis.

4.15. Training and development for schools to help them to use their data effectively has also been established, to help schools to make the best use of data as part of their approach to school improvement.

4.16. Training has also been introduced to ensure that there is consistency in how school improvement officers implement their specialist knowledge in practice.

¹ A more detailed analysis on Denbighshire's performance at each Key Stage is available in the Annex to the Board's Final Report submitted to the Minister in May 2010.

- 4.17. Safeguarding training for all schools has helped to ensure that schools have a consistent understanding of, and approach to, child protection and safeguarding issues.
- 4.18. Governor training has improved, although there appears to be scope for further changes to develop governors' understanding of their role in school improvement.

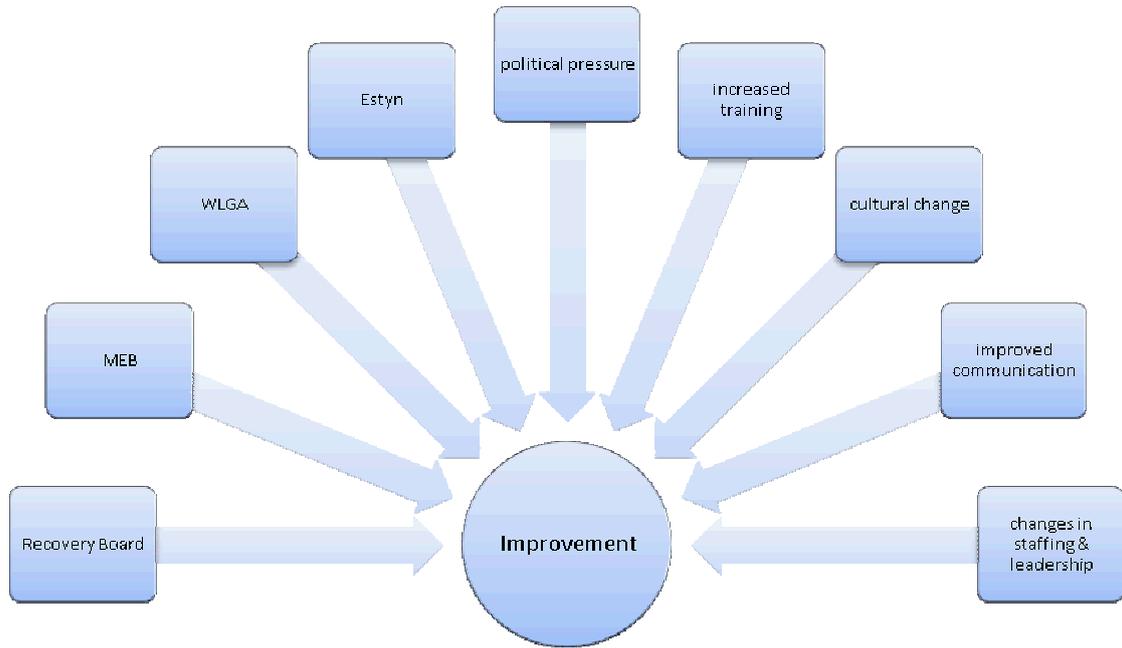
Shift in priorities and values

- 4.19. One of the early concerns, raised by both Estyn (2007) and Cambridge Education Ltd (2007), was that education had historically been relatively low on the Authority's list of priorities. Across all stakeholder respondents it was clear that this was no longer the case, and that education in Denbighshire was now at the forefront of the agenda. Evidence from both the Authority and the Board demonstrated that a cultural change was underway within the Authority, with closer working between different directorates, and between schools and the Authority, as well as improved communications throughout.

Monitoring

- 4.20. Monitoring of progress (carried out by Estyn, by the WLGA and by the WAO) continued to show improvement in the Authority. By July 2009 Estyn's full re-inspection report had been received and was broadly positive, noting that overall progress by the Authority was good, and that accountability (previously a weakness) was now a strength. The report's findings indicated that progress had been rapid, with new people in senior positions driving the improvement.
- 4.21. In summary, there is a range of activities and events that occurred from 2007 onwards which influenced progress in the Authority. These are summarised in the following figure.

Figure 1 Factors influencing improvement



5. Impacts/influences

- 5.1. Establishing the overall impact of the Recovery Board on Denbighshire's progress is challenging, primarily because there is no 'counterfactual' or 'control' – in other words it is not possible to compare outcomes for Denbighshire with a Recovery Board in place to outcomes in Denbighshire without a Recovery Board in place. A further challenge is to isolate the effect of the Recovery Board from the impact of other activities in place to bring about the improvements highlighted in the previous chapter – notably the new senior level appointments, reorganisation of provision, Estyn re-inspections and monitoring visits, the work of Denbighshire's own Modernising Education Board, support from the Welsh Local Government Association, and so on.

Measuring and defining impacts

- 5.2. What is clear from the evidence is that the pace and scope of change within the Authority has been considerable within a relatively short period of time. In this respect it was felt by all respondents that the Board made a positive contribution to the Authority's recovery but generally recognised that it was impossible to identify a direct causal effect, or effects, of the Board on progress – which appeared to be primarily associated with changes in political leadership and key appointments within the Council, followed by improved models of service delivery, improved communication and relationships and a more positive culture.
- 5.3. However, aspects of Board impact were highlighted in the research. In some cases these were identified only by Board members but in other cases they were recognised across a wider range of stakeholders. These are summarised below.

Overall impact

- 5.4. The overarching clear area of impact of the Board was related to its actual presence, over and above any specific function or activity it undertook. Almost universally, it was agreed that having a Board in place demonstrated that the difficulties in Denbighshire's education provision were recognised and acknowledged and that there was a serious and high level commitment to improvement. Among Board members the general view was that it was difficult to isolate or measure the impact of the Board on Denbighshire, but that both their presence and their engagement in the issues had an influence. As one Board member commented, it was 'just the fact that we were there, probing, asking questions, challenging, keeping Denbighshire focused... that's the impact'.
- 5.5. Externally, the general view was that the Board served a supportive function by maintaining a 'watching brief' on the performance and progress of the Authority as it worked hard to improve. The continued pressure on the Authority by virtue of regular meetings, report-back requirements, action plan scrutiny and so forth was felt by those outside of the Authority to hold officials accountable as they endeavoured to implement the recommendations of the Estyn inspection reports.

Other areas of the Board's influence

Focus and momentum

- 5.6. Scrutiny from the Board was felt by both the Board and the Authority to help Denbighshire to ensure that it remained focused on improvement and that momentum was maintained. A particular driver for this was the bi-monthly meetings, at which there was an expectation that Denbighshire would report steps taken, progress made, and so forth. Denbighshire officers and members were very conscious of this and thus ensured that they were always fully prepared and informed with appropriate supporting evidence – there was 'no scope for slippage'.

Partnership agreements

5.7. Every local authority is required to draw up a Partnership Agreement outlining how it will work with schools. On initial review of Denbighshire's Partnership Agreement, the Board felt that it placed too much emphasis on the Authority's responsibility and was not sufficiently explicit in terms of what was required from schools. This was recognised within the Authority and the document was subsequently revisited and revised.

Interface between education and social services

5.8. It was recognised by all that relationships between education and social services were poor – this was highlighted particularly by the developments in Hyfrydle already discussed above. Expertise within the Board to help Denbighshire move forward on this area was strengthened through an additional Board appointment with specialist knowledge.

Management and leadership training

5.9. There was recognition at Board level of the lack of sufficient management and leadership training within the LEA (for example, for governors and senior leadership teams in schools). This was also recognised by the new senior management appointments in the LEA itself and subsequently a dedicated senior leadership and management programme was implemented.

Improving the Interface between schools and the LEA

5.10. Historic difficulties between the LEA and schools had been noted in Estyn's 2007 Inspection Report as well as in the Cambridge Education report (Estyn, 2007; Cambridge Education Ltd, 2007), and were recognised by Denbighshire itself. Difficulties centred on distrust and poor communications. The Board suggested that they had encouraged the two parties to have more effective meetings, to establish stronger

structures for communication, and, generally, had promoted more positive engagement between the two. This, alongside a renewed emphasis on partnership working encouraged by new senior staff in post, was felt to contribute to more productive relationships.

Raising the capacity of schools to self-evaluate and improve their own performance

5.11. Some schools were evidently not using data to its full to help them to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. It was also felt by some, notably Board members, that LEA officers had not, historically, challenged schools to a sufficient extent, with the view being taken that the greater part of the responsibility for school improvement lay with the LEA rather than the schools themselves. Weakness in senior leadership and management in schools was felt to be a factor here, and as noted earlier, the Board encouraged the development of greater investment by the LEA to support senior leadership and management teams training in schools.

Other influences on improvement in Denbighshire

5.12. A recent review of local government support and interventions found that managerial and leadership capability gaps are a significant factor in local authorities with poor performance (Lewis et al, 2007). As alluded to earlier, this did appear to be the case in Denbighshire. The research shows that one of the main drivers for change and sustained improvement has been the appointment of several key individuals at a senior level – this was raised in all discussions with Board members without exception. The commitment of these individuals, particularly the Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Lifelong Learning and Education, as well as continued strength of leadership from the Leader of the Council has clearly been hugely instrumental in bringing about change within Denbighshire. This has provided a renewed and committed focus on education within the county as well as wider

commitments to improvements around corporate governance, leadership and management, communication and organisational culture.

5.13. It was widely recognised by respondents across all stakeholder groups that education had been a low priority for Denbighshire for a number of years prior to the 2006 Estyn inspection. This low level of priority was exemplified by low levels of funding for education alongside an ongoing deterioration of working relationships between schools and the authority. Many stakeholders described how education became 'the number one priority' in the authority following the inspection, and this was strongly demonstrated by the new council leader taking responsibility for education in the cabinet alongside his leadership responsibilities. Additionally, the authority increased its funding of education to help improve capacity within the directorate and funding was ringfenced. Universal recognition of the need for improvement coupled with enhanced capacity for improvement were clearly key.

6. Embedding and sustaining change

- 6.1 This section considers the extent to which the Board were able to influence sustainable improvement within the LEA. It begins, however, by outlining the Board's exit strategy.
- 6.2 At the time the Minister announced the Board (in early 2008), the intention was that it would run for 12 to 18 months and would be subject to review at that time. In the spring of 2008 a decision was taken to extend the life of the Board for a further 12 months (again subject to review at that time). The Board ceased in late spring of 2010.
- 6.3 The decision as to whether the Board would end or be continued rested with the Minister. The Board itself had little influence over this, other than through their regular reporting to the Minister of the progress made in the Authority. This suggested that, notwithstanding the progress which the Authority had made, there was a need to have some form of support and monitoring in place beyond March 2009 (the date of the re-inspection) to ensure consolidation and sustainability. Whilst one or two Board members were initially surprised at the decision to extend the Board, its extension was actually felt to provide an additional safety net to allow a longer time period for the positive progress made to that date to continue and for that progress to remain under careful scrutiny.
- 6.4 There was, however, a sense that the lack of a defined exit strategy for the Board was an area of weakness of the intervention. This left both Board members and Authority officers 'guessing' when the Board would cease. It was felt that the Authority had expected the Board to come to a close once a positive Estyn inspection had been completed, whilst Board members discussed how the Minister needed to be assured that improvement had become embedded and was sustainable before withdrawing the Board. The Estyn re-inspection in March 2009 (Estyn, 2009) showed significant improvements in the functioning of the LEA.

However, there were elements of uncertainty arising from two new appointments into significant posts (Chief Executive and Director of Lifelong Learning) and their longer term contribution to corporate governance improvements. The Ministerial decision to retain the Board following this report was therefore greeted with disappointment by the Authority who felt that the progress they had made by that point was significant and sustainable, whilst the Board felt that this was appropriate action to take in order to ensure that the changes *were* embedded.

6.5 It was also felt by some – particularly Board members - that other indicators of improvement such as examination results, as well as Estyn inspections of schools and education, needed to be considered over the longer term (that is, over several years), to assess the extent to which improvements in the Authority were sustained, as at that time only one set of examinations had been completed with published results. It was therefore felt that the nature of the cycle of academic years necessitated the extension of the Board (with a few respondents from the Board and the Authority advising that it may have been of value to have had the Board in place for *three* sets of examination results).

6.6 However, it was universally accepted (including by Estyn and the WAO) that significant steps of improvement had been made in the Authority (see Chapter 4). The consensus was that the infrastructure was now sufficiently strong to withstand any future ‘dips’ in progress and no further detailed monitoring was required. Amid this was the recognition, however, that much depended on factors such as senior management and strategic leadership (including key posts such as the Chief Executive, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning and the leader of the Council), funding for education, and political change.

6.7 On the 24 May 2010, the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning revoked the Direction made to Denbighshire County Council to co-operate with the Recovery Board and that no further meetings were needed (Ministerial Direction, 2010).

7. Overview – the Board as a recovery intervention

Overall effectiveness of the Board in supporting change

- 7.1. The general consensus among respondents was that the Board, to a greater or lesser degree depending on perspectives, had acted as an impetus for change, supporting the steps being taken within Denbighshire to improve from the position it found itself in by 2007. This was particularly so in the first year of its operation. However, it was recognised by all that there were other activities and events that occurred from 2007 onwards that influenced the progress and recovery within Denbighshire (see Chapter 4)
- 7.2. It is clear, however, that without the key changes in leadership and management at a senior level within the Authority, progress would have been much slower (if at all). In this event, it is likely that the Board, advising the Minister of lack of progress, would have been the catalyst for other intervention to generate improvement.

Value for money

- 7.3. A key consideration in introducing an intervention to bring about change is cost in relation to benefits. Figures provided by DCELLS indicate that the total estimated cost of the Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board over the two years of its operation was £80,000 to £100,000. This comprises around £55,000 in fees, travel and subsistence for the nine Board members to attend 14 meetings, with the remainder to cover Welsh Assembly Government staff costs. The average cost per meeting therefore was just under £4,000 (or just over £400 per attendee).
- 7.4. Compared to the cost of alternative approaches (for example, bringing in external consultants or handing control to another local authority, see

below), this would appear to demonstrate a relatively efficient way of supporting change on the scale required. Whilst, as noted earlier, there is no counterfactual, one might consider that the cost of *not* having an intervention could potentially be far greater.

Transferability of the intervention board ‘model’

7.5. One of the considerations for the evaluation was the extent to which the intervention model used in Denbighshire to support change was one that could be transferred to different contexts. The recovery board model had been used in a range of settings in England (most recently set up in Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council), although there appears to be little evidence as to their effectiveness or impact. However, it was the first time such a board had been established in Wales. However, since the establishment of the Board in Denbighshire, two further Boards have been set up in Wales – one in Swansea² and one in Anglesey³ - though they do not specifically concern education provision.

7.6. Generally, respondents were of the view that the model adopted in Denbighshire could be successfully transferred to other settings – although there were a number of characteristics and environments required for a Board to operate successfully and with influence. These relate to:

- operating in an open and transparent manner from the outset, making clear to all stakeholders what the Terms of Reference are for the Board, likely demands (for example, for information or data), and sharing documents and reports;
- operating in a responsive and flexible manner, so that when new issues emerge (as was the case for Hyfrydle) the Board has

² The Swansea Social Services Intervention Board was set up in 2009 on instruction from Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Social Services, following findings of a Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales inspection report about children’s social services in Swansea. The Board has recently been extended to October 2010.

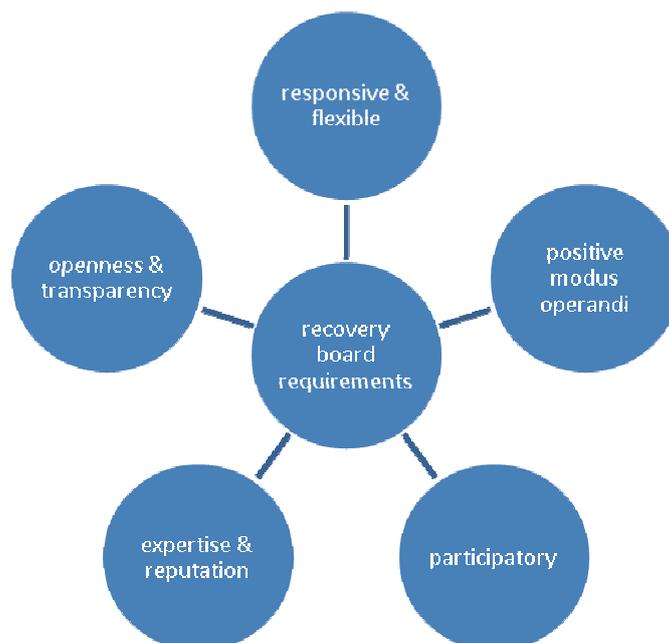
³ In 2009, Brian Gibbons, the then Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, established a Recovery Board for the Isle of Anglesey, following a highly critical report from the Auditor General for Wales on the corporate governance of the Council in Anglesey. The Board’s remit is to advise the Minister on the progress that the Council makes towards addressing the ‘serious corporate weakness’ identified by the Auditor General for Wales.

sufficient flexibility to be able to respond appropriately (gaining specialist advice if needed) and to adjust priorities accordingly;

- positive 'modus operandi' from all involved, viewing the Board as a source of support and guidance rather than a punitive or in some way foreboding role – this positiveness is required both from Board members as well as from the Authority that the Board will scrutinise;
- participatory – individuals participate fully in the process through meetings, dialogue and so forth, as opposed to passive involvement. A Board with a participatory approach would be one where questions, discussions and dialogue are encouraged rather than stifled; and
- expertise and reputation – in order for a Board to be credible, its members must have the appropriate high level of expertise and standing.

These points are illustrated in the diagram that follows.

Figure 2 Characteristics of a successful intervention Board



Alternative approaches

7.7. There are a number of alternative approaches that could, in theory, be introduced in situations such as that faced in Denbighshire. The Minister, in a speech in September 2007, made this very clear:

I will use my power to direct it (Denbighshire Authority) if it fails to grip the situation quickly. My powers of direction can be used in a range of ways, from directing action to be taken to address specific issues through to requiring an authority to hand over the running of its education service to another, external provider (Hutt, 2007).

Respondents were asked to consider the viability and appropriateness of these.

External management consultancy

- 7.8. One option would involve bringing in a team of external management consultants into Denbighshire LEA to work directly with officers and members to bring about improvements.
- 7.9. This approach has been used elsewhere in the UK. For example in April 2001 the Council for Haringey LEA established a strategic partnership with Capita Strategic Education Services⁴, whose brief was to deliver strategic management of educational services, to provide an experienced senior management team and to create a modern framework for relationships between schools and the LEA (which were deemed to be particularly poor). A similar approach was taken in

⁴ See http://www.capita.co.uk/media/Pages/Haringey_LEA_strategic_partnership_success.aspx

Bradford when, in 2001, Serco signed a ten year contract with Bradford Council to replace many of the functions of the failing LEA⁵.

7.10. However, it was felt among respondents that this approach would not have been effective in Denbighshire for the following reasons:

- as an intervention, this was likely to be a very costly option;
- it would be unlikely that an external (private) company would have the breadth of knowledge required, as well as the in-depth Wales contextual understanding and Welsh language capacity;
- it would send out the 'wrong' message about Denbighshire's internal capacity to improve;
- it would be viewed as far more of a 'hands-on', being 'done to' intervention than a recovery board, which it was felt would be a less acceptable approach; and
- it would be a short term solution which may build capacity in the short term but would be unsustainable over the longer term.

Transfer of responsibilities to a neighbouring LEA

7.11. This option would involve transferring key 'failing' responsibilities or services to a neighbouring LEA.

7.12. This option, it was felt, would also have been inappropriate and was also not supported by any of the respondents. The reasons for this rejection were not dissimilar to those given above for the external management consultants – costs, corporate messaging etc. Other reasons included:

- lack of capacity/resources within neighbouring LEAs;
- diminishing expertise and capacity within the existing LEA (which would not be appropriate over the longer term); and

⁵ See <http://www.educationbradford.com/%21+About+Education+in+Bradford+/About+Education+in+Bradford.htm>

- huge organisational and structural complexities in shifting responsibility for some parts of the LEA and not others (not least, Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment).

A greater role for Estyn

7.13. There was a view among a few respondents that there was some duplication between the role of the Board and that of Estyn. Also considered was the potential for Estyn to have a greater role in Denbigh's recovery – through more ongoing intensive support, including provision of advice on how to address specific areas for improvement. That said, in the main it was felt that Estyn's expertise was (rightly) focussed on education, whilst the Board's focus extended beyond that to include relationships with social services, communication and so forth; and, it was noted by some (within and outside of the Authority) that to give Estyn a greater role in improvement would require a fundamental change in how Estyn operates.

A recovery board with greater powers

7.14. The Board's Terms of Reference in the Denbighshire case restricted it to a monitoring role on the ground, and then to reporting back to, and advising the Minister. It was not an executive board in any sense and did not have any power over the Authority to compel it to take specific action. An alternative model may have given a board such powers. Again, there was little support for this. It was felt: (1) that the actual model with its direct reporting line to the Minister was sufficient to have triggered stronger direct intervention should that have been needed; (2) should the Board have been given power then that could have negatively affected the relationship between the Board and the Authority;

and (3) it would have *fundamentally* changed the character of the actual intervention - basically from one which monitored the actions of the LEA to one in which it became an active agent of improvement, taking a share in the responsibility for that happening or not.

'Do nothing'

7.15. Another option could be to 'do nothing', but this was not seriously considered. This option was felt by Board members in particular to be politically a potentially high risk strategy – if Denbighshire's subsequent appointments had not been as positive as they turned out to be, the situation could become irretrievable – the consequences of which would be far reaching. Essentially, a 'do nothing' option for the Minister was a theoretical option, not a 'real world' possibility.

7.16. In summary, whilst there were a number of alternative approaches which could have been used by the Minister to intervene in the difficult situation in Denbighshire, the recovery board model, with a direct 'line' to the Minister, appears to have been the most suitable and cost-effective. In terms of its transferability to other settings or other areas, it would seem that this approach will work best when there is a collective recognition within an authority of what the issues and areas of weakness are, a willingness and commitment to improve, and an effective senior management and leadership team in place to make the changes. In cases where the authority itself appears to lack the internal capacity to make changes and/or a failure to recognise the severity of identified weaknesses, a recovery board may not be the most effective approach.

8. Overview and lessons learnt

- 8.1. This final section provides an overview of the key findings with regard to the effectiveness of the Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board, highlighting the good practice and lessons learnt to help inform decisions about the use of a recovery board in other situations.
- 8.2. As has been discussed in the report, there are various approaches to helping an authority such as Denbighshire to improve, both internally (reorganisation, new staffing, changes in funding, refocusing priorities and so forth) and externally (close scrutiny, inspections, external expertise and support and so forth). The research has demonstrated that, as one tool from a toolkit of several, the Recovery Board instigated by the Minister was a valuable approach which helped to move the Authority forward by providing scrutiny, external accountability and regular monitoring and review of progress; and by emphasising that the situation as it was in Denbighshire was untenable.
- 8.3. However, to maximise the efficiency and effect of such a Board, the following needs to be taken into account.

Expertise of Board Members

- 8.4. The recognised expertise of Board members meant that they were viewed as credible individuals who understood the context. In particular, having individuals with expertise that could effectively 'mirror' the roles of the key individuals within Denbighshire (for example, previous LEA Chief Executive, ex Director of Education, previous and current Head teachers, previous school inspectors) was important. This ensured that that the Board was not only able to fully understand the roles and operations of the Authority but also instilled confidence in Denbighshire officials.

Independence of Board Members

8.5. All Board members should be viewed as independent, with no vested interests. This is important both in terms of how credibly they are viewed externally, as well as their capacity to focus on activities and progress dispassionately. Naturally, appropriate confidentiality of the content of discussions, meetings and documents is paramount.

Recognition of commitment required from Board members

8.6. The commitment required from Board members was not inconsequential – bi-monthly day long meetings, plus interim attendance at various scrutiny and cluster meetings and reading numerous reports, action plans and other associated documents. In particular, for Board members who were still in full-time employment (some were retired or semi-retired, or worked in a self-employed capacity) this could place considerable demand on their time. All Board members were necessarily compensated for their time and incidental expenses, but on occasions a member found it difficult to commit to the Board because of other pressing priorities, particularly in the first few months of the Board's lifetime, when activity was most intensive. Board members should thus be made clear of the likely commitment required before they are in agreement to be a member.

Clarity at the outset on the lifespan and exit strategy for the Board

8.7. It is important that there is as much clarity as to the *lifespan of, and exit strategy* for, the Board as possible. This may be somewhat difficult. In the Denbighshire case, the County Council were somewhat concerned that the original period of operation was extended. From the Ministerial side, the need was for the Board to carry on until sustained recovery was assured. This, by definition, could not be pre-defined. The Terms of Reference directed the Board to continue until Estyn re-inspection, followed by Ministerial decision then as to Board continuance or

otherwise. This may have been taken by the county to mean that evidence of significant progress would lead to Board dissolution. In comparable cases, it might be helpful to state explicitly what was actually the case in Denbighshire: that the sustainability of improvement not just improvement itself had to be demonstrated – a factor which required a longer scrutiny period.

- 8.8. Perhaps, too, there could be scope to reduce the size of the Board in the *latter stages* of its life – core members or a skeleton board could provide ongoing ‘arms length’ scrutiny with a lighter touch to ensure that change has been embedded.

Clarity on the role of the Board

- 8.9. Similarly the *role of the Board* should be as clear as possible. In the Denbighshire case, the Minister *was* clear that the role of the Board was to provide feedback on progress and advice to the Minister. Estyn would provide feedback from monitoring visits but not advice. However, on the ground, the Board’s role and its distinction from that of Estyn was not fully understood. Clearly, by its presence alone, the Board was a stimulus to change and gave impetus to the recovery process; but in some specific instances, the Board used its expertise and experience to encourage the Authority in certain directions. The boundary between monitoring of, and engagement with, the recovery process was, perhaps, not always maintained and not all actors in the recovery process were convinced that the roles of the Board and Estyn were clearly different or differentiated.

- 8.10. Related to this is the role of the DCELLS officials who worked closely with the Board, which it appeared was not always clear to the Authority. Early definition of their role – there to provide guidance and to flag issues to the Board in addition to providing a secretariat function – is required so that there are clear lines of accountability and reporting.

8.11. Furthermore, it was evident that the different roles of the Board and Estyn needed to be clearly articulated, perhaps by ensuring that the requirements from Estyn and the Board (for example, information requirements and the timing of these) were dovetailed to avoid any duplication of effort. Estyn's role, as 'arm's length', needs to be made clear.

Terms of Reference and Focus

8.12. Whilst it is important that the Terms of Reference are sufficiently defined to give a board direction and a framework within which to operate, there is an inherent risk in an intervention such as a recovery board being overtly focused on a single area, which may then distract from the need to engage with other pressing emerging issues. Terms of Reference should be referred to, and reviewed, throughout a Board's operation to ensure that they reflect the situation(s) under scrutiny, and to ensure that the Board does not unnecessarily deviate from the core issues. Where changes are required to the Terms of Reference, these will clearly need to have approval at a Ministerial level.

Early familiarisation

8.13. The complexity of the issues in Denbighshire coupled with the volume of information Board members needed to absorb was such that it took the Board considerable time at the start to understand the environment. In hindsight, it was felt by some that attendance at some of the 'fringe' meetings – school cluster meetings, scrutiny meetings, modernising education board meetings and so forth – at an earlier stage in the process might have been beneficial in helping Board members to accelerate their understanding of the issues and activities underway. Likewise, it was suggested that because of the pace of change and the volume of activity which was occurring behind the scenes, it could have been useful to have someone, perhaps a government official, who could attend more of these meetings and report back to the Board.

Board activities

8.14. It was evident that work in between the bi-monthly meetings was critical in enhancing the Board's effectiveness – attending meetings and observing activities at meetings in Denbighshire and engaging in dialogue with officials (by phone and face to face). Whilst not explicitly outlined as a Board responsibility in the Terms of Reference, it was recognised at an early stage by the Board that in order for it to fulfil its responsibilities to the best of its ability, it would be necessary to undertake work between meetings. Any subsequent recovery Board would need to ensure that these kinds of activities were also incorporated to maximise the Board's contribution.

Conclusion

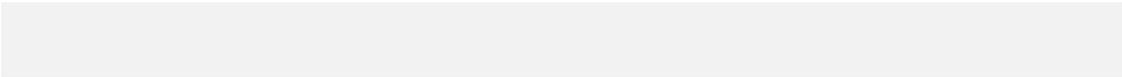
8.15. Although the Board's explicit role in its Terms of Reference was 'to report to and advise the Minister in relation to the performance of the whole of Denbighshire's education service', its additional effect, inevitably, was to apply significant pressure on the recovery process in Denbighshire. Its detailed scrutiny ensured that, should there have been any tendency to lack of impetus or lack of focus on urgent priorities at the level of the County's new political and executive leadership or below, then that tendency was eliminated. In practice, when the new leadership was in place within the county there was no lack of impetus - it is perhaps for this reason that the consensual view within the Authority itself was that the Board had not made a significant impact on progress.

8.16. Although there was, on the ground, some lack of clarity in respect of the Board's function, lifespan, and operations (as alluded to above), this was, perhaps, inevitable in so far as a new model for remedying a difficult situation was being applied for the first time in Wales; and was, in any case, mostly marginal in respect of the Board's overall effectiveness and impact.

8.17. Whilst the recovery process was, in fact, successful, if this had not been the case the Board's reporting back to the Minister would have made this evident – perhaps, more quickly and more clearly than would otherwise have been the case – and allowed early application of other measures. The Board, therefore, had an important 'backstop' function (though one which, in practice, it did not need to exercise).

8.18. The Board's impacts were achieved at relatively low cost and in a way which preserved the integrity and sustainability of a Local Education Authority.

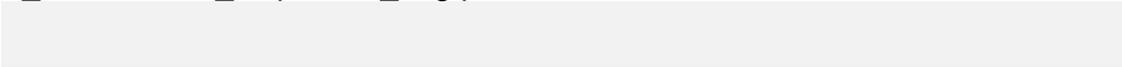
8.19. The Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board was, therefore, a successful intervention which, with due regard to the matters raised above, is likely to be a valuable approach to the remedy of other instances of under-performance by public services in Wales.



References

- BBC, 2007. *Minister Acts over Schools Crisis*. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/north_east/7103831.stm (accessed 15th June 2010).
- Cambridge Education, 2007. *Modernising Education in Denbighshire*.
- Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board, 2010. *Final Report*. Welsh Assembly Government, May 2010. <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/improvingschools/denbighshirerecoveryboard/finalreport/?jsessionid=JnVcMTYJyTY23yXrwrGwJfFLh1ys554MrSrTn5Q1VpQLlryXz15q!-42672990?lang=en> (accessed 28th September 2010)
- Estyn, 2006. *A report on the Quality of Youth Services in Denbighshire County Council*. Estyn, May 2006. See http://www.estyn.gov.uk/inspection_reports/Denbighshire_YPP.pdf
- Estyn, 2007. *A report on the quality of Denbighshire Local Authority - Strategic management, School improvement, Promoting social inclusion and well-being and Additional learning needs*. Estyn, July 2007. See http://www.estyn.gov.uk/inspection_reports/Denbighshire_Local_Authority_July_2007.pdf
- Estyn, 2009. *Quality and standards in education and training in Wales A report on the quality of Denbighshire Local Authority*. Estyn, March 2009. See http://www.estyn.gov.uk/inspection_reports/denbighshire_local_authority1_march_2009.pdf
- Estyn, 2010. *Denbigh Monitoring Report*. January 2010.
- Hutt, J, 2007. *Education Services in Denbighshire – Press Release*. See <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2007/250907jh/?lang=en>
- Lewis, M, Phillips, W and Piercy, N, 2007. *Codifying Local Government Support and Intervention*. University of Bath School of Management/Welsh Assembly Government.
- Ministerial Direction, 2010. <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/schools/denbighshirerecoveryboard/?lang=en> (accessed 23rd July 2010).
- Rowett, R and Associates (2008). *Management Review of Hyfrydle*. [http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/www/cms/live/content.nsf/lookupattachments/English~DNAP-7JYEVJ/\\$File/Hyfrydle%20Investigation%20final%20report%201.1.pdf](http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/www/cms/live/content.nsf/lookupattachments/English~DNAP-7JYEVJ/$File/Hyfrydle%20Investigation%20final%20report%201.1.pdf) (accessed 27th September 2010)
- Wales Audit Office, 2008. *Corporate Governance Inspection: Denbighshire Authority*. See

http://www.wao.gov.uk/assets/englishdocuments/Denbighshire_CC_Corporate_Governance_Inspection_eng.pdf



Annex A Timeline of DIERB Activities

1. Examination of Board minutes and the Chair's reports allows a more detailed appreciation of how the Board operated from its first meeting (31 January 2008) to a point approaching its dissolution (spring 2010).
2. The then-Minister attended the **first meeting** and reaffirmed her priorities as being: the achievement of pupils in the county's schools; the quality of management and leadership of education in the county; the effectiveness of the management of school places; the strength and productiveness of the relationship between schools and the local authority; and the effectiveness of youth services.
3. Following that, an overview of the history to, and context of, the current situation was presented. Estyn presented their most recent Inspection Report of the Authority. A Denbighshire County Council presentation acknowledged the major challenges faced in transforming the quality of education in the County. The County Council agreed to share their internal progress reports with the Board at each subsequent Board meeting. The Board established arrangements to meet with headteachers from the county and WLGA and requested specific items of data from Welsh Assembly Government officers.
4. By **March 2008**, information and documentation provided by the Welsh Assembly Government, Estyn and Denbighshire County Council had been scrutinised, and presentations by, and discussions with, Welsh Assembly Government officers, Estyn, Denbighshire County Council, WLGA officers and consultants, and representatives of Denbighshire Headteachers' Federation had been received or held.
5. Following the second meeting of the Board (7 March 2008), the Board was able to make a cautiously positive judgement that progress by the Denbighshire LEA was being made.
6. The Board reported that there had been a change of culture leading to marked improvements at political and executive levels. The Leader of the Council had shown positive leadership and Education was now the Council's top priority. He had worked closely with the Chief Executive and the then interim Director of Lifelong Learning to establish systems and processes aimed at securing improvement at all levels and procedures for monitoring the progress made. The interim Director of Lifelong Learning was believed to have a realistic understanding of the challenges faced by the Authority and the drive to see the Action Plan implemented successfully.
7. The interim Head of School Improvement was reported as having done much to establish the school improvement agenda, develop a partnership agreement with schools and set up cluster arrangements for schools. A new permanent Head of School Improvement, who had experience as HM Inspector of Education and Training and senior management in schools, had been appointed. Other appointments made, or about to be made, at that point were a School Improvement Officer for Primary Schools, a Secondary School Advisory Officer and a Numeracy Adviser.
8. A significant increase of £1.75m in the education budget had been agreed for 2008/09 bringing the total allocation for education above the Standard Spending Assessment level. Also, some extra money had been channelled into education during the then-current financial year. This was largely targeted at improving borderline C/D GCSE result. However, headteachers had expressed the view that there was a need for greater clarity as to how the funding formula worked and what funds were held centrally.

9. The Authority had put in place a system to measure progress in the implementation of its Action Plan. Progress was reported to the Modernising Education Board (MEB), which met at weekly/fortnightly intervals. Minutes of the MEB indicated that 'at risk' elements of the Plan and failed deadlines were being rigorously pursued.
10. There was early evidence of progress in the Authority's relationship with schools; the development of the School Partnership Agreement, the formation of a Headteachers' Federation, which was represented on the appointments panel for key LEA appointments, the setting up of Chair of Governors Forum and the organisation of clustering (mutual support) arrangements for schools.
11. However, because of the history of discord between the schools and the Authority, the Board believed there was still a considerable way to go to achieve complete harmony. Some headteachers believed that they did not have the trust and respect of the Authority and regarded LEA intervention as a threat to their autonomy. They were also critical of the Action Plan's emphasis on improving pupils' attainments in tests and examinations, as opposed to looking for more rounded achievement criteria.
12. Summing up progress to that point, the Board reported that a promising start had been made in trying to change the culture within the Authority and in improving the Authority's capacity and ability to secure improvements. It was stressed, however, that the journey towards improvement was only just beginning and that it was too early to assess how effective the systems and processes that have been put into place would be in securing continuous, sustained improvement.
13. By **April 2008** (and the third meeting of the Board), an Estyn Quarterly Monitoring Visit Report had been received and scrutinised by the Board.
14. The Board identified four key inter-related challenges for Denbighshire and discussed them with the Council's representatives at the meeting.
15. The first was that of *sustainability and maintaining momentum*. It was recognised that, since October 2007, the Council had been involved in an intense level of activity establishing the necessary plans, systems and procedures necessary to effect improvements in educational provision and outcomes. The Board recognised that maintaining the momentum generated in this period across a broad range of activities over a further period of time, would be a considerable challenge. The support of the new Council and Cabinet in continuing to give priority to education following the local government elections in May 2008 would be crucial.
16. The second was that of *moving forward from establishing processes and increasing capacity at LEA level to improving outcomes at school level*. The Board's Initial Assessment of Progress (in March 2008) and the Estyn Quarterly Monitoring Visit Report both reported that the Council had made a promising start in providing a clearer direction for its education services and had enhanced its capacity to effect change and improvement. The further challenge was to make effective use of the systems that had been developed and the capacity created so as to channel energies into activities directly aimed at improving pupil achievement.
17. The third challenge was that of *gaining the trust and full co-operation of schools*. The Board had reported in its Initial Assessment of Progress that the Authority had made some progress in improving its consultation and communication with schools, but that there was a considerable way to go in establishing complete trust and full co-operation. Estyn's Quarterly Monitoring Visit report had confirmed this judgement.
18. The Board was concerned at this point that some schools were seeing the Estyn and Cambridge Education reports solely as LEA problems rather than as challenges to all those involved in providing education within the County. There was an urgent need to move towards a situation where all stakeholders – elected members, LEA officers,

governing bodies, headteachers, and teachers – had a clear understanding of their respective roles in the school improvement process.

19. Finally, the Board believed there was a need to *ensure effective co-operation between education and Social Services*. The Board noted that the Estyn Quarterly Monitoring Report indicated that relationships between parts of the education and social services were ineffective. The Board had raised the matter with the Authority's officers, but had not been able to identify the precise problem, but resolved to pursue this issue further.
20. At this point the Board considered its future methods of working. It was believed that a change of emphasis would be appropriate. The Board would invite representatives of key stakeholders (for example, Chair of Governors Forum, Parents' Association and Youth Service Providers) to give their views at Board meetings and updates on progress from Denbighshire would continue as a standing item on the agenda.
21. However, in order to obtain a true picture of what was happening, the Board considered that members needed to go out into the field to observe and discuss developments with various organisations and groups.
22. In part, this had already begun. A meeting of the MEB had been attended by a Board representative. A Board member would attend the Scrutiny Committee in June 2008 and would seek an invitation to attend the Headteachers Forum and Cluster Group meetings. The Board was also exploring the most effective means of obtaining the views of young people.
23. By **mid-2008**, the Board believed that significant progress in recovering education in Denbighshire was becoming further apparent. Following its meeting on 19 June, the Board summarised its view as:
 - There was improved leadership and clearer direction for the education service within the Authority.
 - There had been an improvement in officer capacity and communication with schools, and a sharper focus on school improvement.
 - Considerable effort had been invested in producing a detailed Children and Young People's Plan. However, further consultation would be necessary to ensure priorities received adequate and appropriate funding, focus and attention.
 - The re-establishing of the Governors Forum was a positive step. It had the potential to foster greater understanding between the Authority and schools and of helping to move forward the school improvement agenda.
 - The willingness of the Authority's Scrutiny Committee, which had a new Chair and largely new membership, to provide robust challenge augured well for its future role.
24. Some reservations remained, however:
 - It was felt to be too early to assess the impact of these changes on the performance of schools and the youth services.
 - The effective presentation and use of data to monitor performance remained a challenge.
 - A school governor training programme was underway, but it seemed to have made little impact to that point. In the Board's view, the Authority needed to address issues regarding the recruitment, induction and continuing training of

governors. A greater emphasis needed to be placed, in governor training, on the monitoring of school performance and the interpretation of data.

25. By **September 2008**, the Board had received some examination results (2008 for comparison with 2007) and an assessment of progress from the WLGA.
26. The Authority's analysis of results indicated that some progress had been made at KS4 and A Level. However, the results at KS1 were disappointing. The Board took the view that it was too early to assess the impact of the Authority's school improvement initiatives on school performance, but that it was encouraging that detailed school by school analyses of performance were now available and, thus, that schools not showing progress could be identified for intervention and support.
27. The WLGA assessment of progress confirmed that:
 - Denbighshire had prioritised education.
 - Management structures, plans, and policies were now in place.
 - Staff capacity issues had been resolved.
 - School improvement strategies supported by good quality data had been developed.
 - Governor training and support was moving in the right direction.
28. In its own evaluation at this point, the Board acknowledged the considerable progress that had been made and concluded that the main challenges now facing the Authority were:
 - Pushing forward its School Improvement Programme. This included engaging schools so that they took ownership of the Programme and changing the culture of schools to one of continuous self-evaluation.
 - Maintaining the momentum of its ambitious programme, especially in the context of a challenging Welsh Assembly Government financial settlement.
 - Developing a strategy based on sound educational principles for small primary schools.
 - Re-organising post-16 education in the Rhyl area.
 - Developing a long-term strategy for Lifelong Learning which went beyond the Action Plans produced in response to Estyn inspection reports.
29. In **October 2008**, the Board considered examination results of the county's secondary schools in more detail. There were wide variations between schools and some significant variations within schools also. Key questions regarding each school's performance were identified and later communicated to the Head of School Improvement.
30. The Board noted the positives and the negatives in the latest Estyn Quarterly Monitoring Report and resolved to pursue some of the issues raised, such as inconsistencies in working practices between school improvement officers and lack of support for Welsh-medium schools, at its next meeting.
31. Overall, the Board acknowledged the major strides forward made on leadership, management, capacity and scrutiny issues but continued to be concerned about school performance, funding of the Modernising Education programme, and the sustainability of current initiatives post the Estyn re-inspection in March 2009.
32. By **December 2008**, the Board recognised that it was coming to the end of its intended lifetime, and began to review and analyse the evidence it had accumulated,

in order to finalise its assessment of progress made by Denbighshire. The Board believed that, while it would be possible to comment on the processes, procedures and structures that had been put in place, it would be more difficult to evaluate the intended outcomes. Many of the outcomes – for example, improvements in school performance and aspects of the Modernising Education programme – could only be assessed in the longer term.

33. Given that the recovery process was in its early stages, the Board was of the view that, notwithstanding the progress which Denbighshire had made and irrespective of the outcomes of the Estyn re-inspection, some kind of support, monitoring and pressure mechanism would need to be in place post March 2009 (the date of the re-inspection) to ensure the consolidation and sustainability of current initiatives leading to lasting improvements in education provision.
34. Meeting in **February 2009**, the Board's deliberations had a 'stock taking' aspect, continuing to recognise the pluses and minuses in Denbighshire's position, considering self-evaluation, and recognising the Estyn Re-Inspection Report in March 2009 as a major test of progress.
35. However, in **March 2009**, the Minister took the view that work remained to be done in Denbighshire to ensure that strategies and planning were clearly linked to actions which would result in services that were of a consistently good quality. It was clear that progress was still at an early stage and the Minister wanted to be confident that improvements were embedded and being sustained before intervention in education in the Authority was removed.
36. **With this in mind, the Minister invited the Board to continue for a further period of 12 months.**
37. The Minister also noted that Estyn had recently completed a full re-inspection of Denbighshire Authority including Youth Support services and expected to receive their advice on the outcome of this in July 2009.
38. Thus, by **July 2009**, Estyn's full Re-Inspection Report had been received and was reviewed by the Board, now with a remit to work for a further year. The report was broadly positive:
 - Overall progress by the Authority was good. Accountability had been a major weakness at the previous inspection but was now a strength.
 - The LEA had set up a School's Standard Monitoring Group.
 - The LEA had 'come a long way in a short time and now had good quality people in senior positions to continue this improvement'.
39. There were some concerns – regarding Youth Support Services, School Improvement and Support Services, and community focus – but these were in the context of an overall picture which was greatly different from that in the Inspection Report in 2007 (which had largely provoked Assembly Government intervention). By this time, the Board noted, indeed, that the County Council was expressing disappointment that intervention (by the Board and Estyn) was continuing. In the County Council's view, Denbighshire's performance was no longer qualitatively different from that of other Welsh LEAs and quantitative indicators showed significant improvement.
40. By **September 2009**, evidence to this effect was presented to the Board. Examination results for 2009 had improved to a point where they were 'on a par for Wales' (though improvement was not consistent across all secondary schools), a variety of administrative arrangements and services were working effectively, and headteachers took the view that significant progress had been made. Further

examination of 2009 examination results in **November 2009** placed Denbighshire in a positive light but the specific and continuing weakness of some schools was noted.

41. In January 2010, Estyn produced a further Quarterly Monitoring Report which was (mainly) positive:
- *The Authority has made good progress against most of the recommendations in Estyn's March 2009 Re-Inspection Report.*
 - *The Authority has set itself ambitious targets to be in the top 10 Local Authorities in Wales by 2010 for all its performance indicators. However, at the time of the monitoring visit, the Authority was not able to show how these targets would be achieved within the timescale.*
 - *The Council has restructured its senior management team effectively. This has enabled the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to introduce a culture of ambition and aspiration. The Council has set ambitious yet realistic targets and is working well towards achieving them. The new CEO and leader of the Council are working jointly to enable staff to achieve the Council's targets and help staff focus more closely on performance.*
 - *The leader works well across all political parties to achieve cross-party commitment to secure education as a priority and to allocate extra resources for improvement.*
 - *Senior managers are making good use of the change programme to drive forward the Council's commitment to improving education and make sure that staff understand their responsibilities.*
 - *The Council has good processes in place to monitor progress and identify areas for development. These have helped it to recognise the progress that has been made and what needs to be tackled, and*
 - *Elected members now have a good knowledge and understanding of education services and what they need to do to improve. The Council has made very good progress in improving the quality of scrutiny of lifelong learning. Officers provide good information to members who critically review and scrutinise services effectively*
42. Coming to the end of the second (renewed) stage of its operational lifetime, the Board produced a correspondingly positive overview assessment of the LEA in **February 2010** with a final report in **May 2010**, highlighting the following:
- *Leadership and management:* Strong and effective leadership at political and officer level and planning at strategic and operational level was much improved.
 - *Communication and consultation:* Communication and consultation with schools, parents and the wider community were much improved. Schools and the Authority now co-operated in a climate of mutual respect and trust, which needed to be carefully fostered and developed to meet the challenges ahead.
 - *School performance:* There had been a number of initiatives designed to improve school performance. These were beginning to have an effect, with continuing improvements, especially at KS4. There remained inconsistencies across subjects, schools, and key stages.
 - *Finance and resources:* Education was being accorded priority in resource allocation within the Authority. There was now greater transparency regarding funding processes and decisions. Prioritising the use of resources to facilitate

sustainable long-term improvement would remain a major challenge for the Authority.

- *Youth support services:* Though there had been a number of initiatives in response to the Estyn reports, progress had been generally slow in improving the range and quality of youth support services in the county. However, there were now indications that the pace of change would accelerate following the appointment of a new head of Youth Services, the drawing up of an Action Plan in response to the Estyn re-inspection, and the planned implementation of the recommendations of an independent review of the Authority's youth services.
- *Modernising Education programme:* The early stages of the modernising education programme had been managed effectively. The agreed policy framework should provide a firm basis for reforming educational provision in the county over the longer term. However, translating these policies into concrete proposals would pose considerable challenge and would depend on the availability of finance as well as strong leadership and management skills.
- *Working with Social Services:* There was an awareness at Director level of the importance of close co-operation between Lifelong Learning and Social Services. The steps taken to facilitate this had ensured better collaboration between the services and a change of culture within the Directorates.
- *The Future:* The Board recognised that the Authority will face continuing and fresh challenges over the next few years, particularly with respect to school reorganisation and funding levels, and that it will need to continue to prioritize education and be firm in its resolve to build on the progress made and to see successful outcomes emerging from its Action and Work Plans. In its final report, the Board stated its belief that Denbighshire now has the leadership, structures, determination and capacity to sustain its improvement programme and to meet these challenges. Thus, the Board felt that under the current regime there is little danger of the LEA slipping back into the 'failing' category.

Annex B Board Terms of Reference

The Board

1. The Denbighshire Independent Education Recovery Board (“the Board) will comprise four to eight members including a Chairperson appointed by the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (‘the Minister’).
2. The Board will advise and report to the Minister about the performance of Denbighshire County Council’s (‘Denbighshire’) education service.
3. The Board is to report to and advise the Minister in relation to the performance of the whole of Denbighshire’s education service but is to focus primarily on Denbighshire’s compliance with the Direction issued by the Minister dated 20 November 2007 requiring Denbighshire to make improvements in the provision of its education service. The Board is also to advise the Minister about any further Direction or other action she might take if the Board is not satisfied by the performance of Denbighshire’s education service. The Board is to pay particular attention to:
 - i) progress on the action plan prepared by Denbighshire in response to Estyn’s July 2007 inspection of the education service and the action plan for the 2006 inspection of Youth Support Services (and any amendments to those plans as may be approved by Estyn);
 - ii) progress on weaknesses and opportunities identified by the Cambridge Education Limited report commissioned by Denbighshire County Council; and
 - iii) progress on reviewing provision of school places, including 16-19 provision.
4. The Board will consider monitoring and review reports from Estyn and any advice or information provided by the Chief Inspector or her inspectors to the Board or more generally.
5. The Board may ask elected members, officers, employees or anyone providing services to Denbighshire to provide it with documentation or to attend Board meetings to provide information or answer any questions the Board may request. If such requests are declined the Board must advise a named official of the Welsh Assembly Government immediately in writing.
6. The Board may seek information from any person or source it chooses about Denbighshire’s education service and it may ask that person to attend Board meetings. The Board cannot compel persons to attend Board meetings.
7. The Board acting collectively or through its individual members may not:
 - a) incur expenditure;
 - b) enter into agreements or contracts;
 - c) make decisions or purport to take any action on behalf of the Minister or the Welsh Assembly Government; or
 - d) make any statements or engage in any press or media coverage in relation to the Board or Denbighshire’s education service without the written permission of a named official of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Duration of the Board

8. The Board will exist until Estyn advises the Minister about the outcome of its re-inspection of Denbighshire’s education service. At that time the Minister will decide

whether to retain the Board for a further period and will notify the Board of her decision in writing.

Reporting arrangements

9. After each meeting the Board will report to the Minister in writing within ten working days. The report will be delivered to the Minister by sending it to a named official of the Welsh Assembly Government. The report will be in a format agreed with the Welsh Assembly Government.
10. If requested to do so, the Board will provide reports or information to the Minister or her officials in addition to the reports generated by Board meetings as required by paragraph 9.
11. For day to day administrative purposes the Board will report to the Secretariat. For all other purposes the Board may bring any matter to the attention of a named official of the Welsh Assembly Government.
12. The Welsh Assembly Government may make or instruct the Board to make the Board's reports and any other information it provides available to the public.

Frequency and location of meetings

13. The Board will meet at least once in January, February and March 2008. Thereafter, the Board will meet not less than once every two months at dates to be agreed with a named official of the Welsh Assembly Government. The Board may meet more frequently if its Chairperson recommends that to a named official of the Welsh Assembly Government and that official agrees or if the Minister or her officials ask the Board to meet more frequently. Such additional requests would be made in writing.
14. Board meetings will be held at the Welsh Assembly Government's Office in St Asaph, or at Denbighshire's Ruthin Office, unless the Secretariat makes other arrangements.
15. Board meetings will be held in private however those persons invited by virtue of paragraphs 4, 5 or 6 may also attend Board meetings. If the Board wishes to invite any person outside the scope of paragraphs 4, 5 or 6 the Chairperson must obtain in advance the written permission of the Welsh Assembly Government's named official. The Welsh Assembly Government may send whichever officials it chooses to observe Board meetings.

Secretariat

16. The Welsh Assembly Government will provide the Secretariat for Board meetings. The support will include scheduling meetings, clerking meetings, collation and distribution of papers for meetings including documentation provided by Denbighshire and Estyn, assistance in preparing reports to the Minister, and administration of fees and expenses for Board members.

Membership

17. The Minister will appoint all Board members including any members who might be appointed at a later date as additional members or to replace original Board members.
18. The Minister will appoint the Chairperson of the Board.
19. Members, including the Chairperson, are appointed for the duration of the Board's life unless the Minister specifies otherwise or the Member or Chairperson resigns from the post or is unable to fulfil the requirements of the post.
20. Board members' remuneration and expenses for travel and subsistence will be paid by the Welsh Assembly Government in accordance with the level of such payments paid by

the Welsh Assembly Government to public appointees (as agreed from time to time) unless agreed otherwise in writing and in advance by the named official.

Annex C Board Members

Mr Roy Lewis James CBE – Chairman of the Board

After 12 years teaching experience in secondary schools in Surrey, Ceredigion and Merthyr Tydfil, Roy James was appointed as HM Inspector of Schools in 1970. Following management roles within the Inspectorate, including responsibility for pre-vocational education and post-16 education in schools and further education, he was appointed as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales in 1990. Since retiring from the Inspectorate, he has undertaken research and consultancy for central government and its agencies, LEAs, think tanks and universities, including periods as External Professor at the University of Glamorgan and Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff. The research and consultancy work has been wide-ranging and includes: education policy in Wales; school improvement; initial teacher training; continuing professional development of teachers and headteachers; curriculum and assessment in schools; pre-school education; and reviewing the pattern of primary and secondary provision within individual LEAs.

Mr Rod Alcott

Rod Alcott has worked in the public sector in Wales for over 30 years. He was the Wales Audit Office Relationship Manager for Denbighshire County Council. The principal purpose of the role is to co-ordinate the regulatory work for the Council with both the education inspectorate (Estyn) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and to report the outcomes from this work in the Wales Audit Office's Annual Letter to the Council.

Mr John Clutton

John Clutton retired from his post as Director of Education and Children's Services and Recreation with Flintshire County Council, where he was lead Director for Children and Young People. He was formerly Assistant Director with Flintshire when his responsibilities included school improvement, curriculum support and advice and all aspects of financial delegation to schools. Prior to joining Local Government, Mr. Clutton had a highly successful career as a senior manager in three comprehensive schools in Cheshire and North Wales.

Ms Sandra Davies OBE

Sandra Davies worked as a teacher, middle manager, senior manager and headteacher in the secondary sector from 1972. She has been involved in key educational policy and training developments in Wales having contributed to the work of Education and Training Action Group, which produced ETAP, and the initial Future Skills Wales report. She has had on-going practical involvement in education and training since retirement with membership of ACCAC, involvement with the Teaching and Learning Research Programme and school inspections, as a training provider for CE and CELT, as an adviser to governing bodies on the performance management of headteachers, and as a non-executive director of the board of Estyn.

Mr Dewi Lake

Mr Dewi Lake is an experienced head teacher at Ysgol y Moelwyn comprehensive school, Blaenau Ffestiniog, North Wales. The school is well known as a community school for its positive behaviour management and standards raising strategies. A representation from the school was invited to a reception at 10 Downing Street last year in recognition of the school's successes. In 2006 the school was nominated and shortlisted as one of three schools throughout Britain for the quality and provision of extra curricular sporting provision. It was

also nominated the overall North Wales champion school for bucking the trend of educational achievements and recently gained excellent grades in an Estyn inspection. It has maintained high Investors in People and Basic Skills Quality Award standards and has recently gained two national awards in recognition of the standards of its careers education.

Professor Michael Scott DL

Professor Scott was the Principal and Chief Executive of the North East Wales Institute of Higher Education until it became Glyndŵr University on 3 July 2008 when he became the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive. He was a Member of the BBC Council for Wales from 2003 - 2007. He has been Chairman of the North Wales Film Commission, Chairman of the North Wales Events Commission, is a Member of the North Wales Economic Forum Steering Committee and Vice-Chair of Theatr Clwyd. He is also a Member of the CBI Council and the University of Wales Council. On agreement by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills he became the first Chairman of UNESCO Cymru Wales Committee in 2005 through to 2009.

Mr Richard Owen Watkin OBE DL

Owen Watkin was Chief Executive of Ceredigion County Council from 1996 until he retired in April 2007. During that period he was closely involved in the corporate and democratic processes of the authority, as well as the management of service performance to meet the expectations of elected Members, audit and inspectorates. During his time with the authority, he led on the introduction of changes in governance and partnership matters as well as in services relating to children and young people, including the reforms relating to partnerships in this area and the cohesive provision of local authority services relating to all children under the nominated lead Director. He has recently been a member of a Welsh Assembly Government Commission into local government, a member of a Probation Trust and is currently an Assessor for the Welsh Local Government Association project 'Excellence Wales'.

Ms Shan Wilkinson OBE

Shan Wilkinson was Leader of Wrexham County Borough Council from 2000-2004, and Co-Chair of Wrexham's Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee from 2004-2006, leading the scrutiny of schools' performance and the role of the education department. Until May 2008 she was a member of the Local Government Association's Children and Young People Board and an accredited Peer Reviewer with the Local Government Association and the WLGA. She is a librarian with many years experience of work with children and young people, and is currently Manager, Library Services, for Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Ms Christine Walby OBE

Currently a Consultant in children's services Christine Walby has worked in the youth service and social work and was Director of Social Services in two local authorities and national spokesperson on children and young people's issues for the Association of Directors of Social Services. She has given advice and help on children's services to many local authorities, police and health authorities and advised the Chair of the Welsh Assembly Government 'Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Review'. A former Chair and Trustee of 'Children in Wales' and Chair and founder member of Tros Gynnal, the children's advocacy service in Wales she has also acted as independent Chair of a Local Safeguarding Children Board in South Wales

Ms Jane Lavelle

Jane Lavelle worked as a teacher, middle manager and senior manager in Lifelong Learning - Community Education sector from 1972. She has contributed to key policy developments in Wales for the Youth Service. She has been a peer assessor with Estyn since 1998 and more recently an additional inspector.