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Effects of changes to the school year and alternative school calendars: qualitative research and an updated review of the evidence

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Title: Effects of changes to the school year and alternative school calendars: qualitative research and an updated review of the evidence

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

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
KAS	Knowledge and Analytical Services
REA	Rapid Evidence Assessment

1. Key findings

- 1.1 There is evidence of concern that the current school calendar can have a detrimental effect on student attendance and can result in short-term learning loss. Interviewees felt these negative effects were alleviated somewhat by the extension of the autumn half-term and the shortening of the summer break.
- 1.2 There is some evidence of the view that the long summer break might contribute towards a widened disadvantage gap, with some families struggling with childcare.
- 1.3 Interviewees felt that an extended October half-term contributed positively to both staff and student wellbeing.
- 1.4 For local authorities across England and Scotland that had made changes to their school calendar, many of these changes were in line with neighbouring authorities.
- 1.5 Some evidence of the importance of in-break provision to the mitigation of learning loss was identified. However, this was not the key focus of the study, and further exploration of such provision and its impact is required.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This piece of research aimed to support the Welsh Government's ongoing 'Programme for Government' (Welsh Government, 2022) and Co-operation Agreement (2021) commitments to explore reforms to the school calendar to bring them more in line with modern patterns of family life and employment. This area of work sits within the Welsh Government's long-term commitment around education reform and ensuring educational inequalities narrow and standards rise.
- 2.2 In Wales, the current school year is divided into three terms; an autumn term that spans from September to December, a spring term from January to March/April, and a summer term from April to July. The school year is distributed slightly unevenly, with the autumn term being longer than the spring and summer terms. Schools are required to provide 380 sessions (or 190 days) of learning a year (Education (School Day and School Year) (Wales) Regulations 2003, regulation 4), with 13 weeks of holiday a year. At present, each term is broken up by a one-week half-term holiday, with a two-week break for Christmas/new Year, a two-week break for Easter, and a six-week summer holiday. Due to the Easter school holiday being planned around the date of Easter Sunday each year, spring and summer terms can vary in length.
- 2.3 In 2021, Welsh Government commissioned a piece of research into attitudes towards school year reform in Wales as part of wider policy development and stakeholder engagement work. Responses to an online survey indicated that participants were 'reasonably' content with the current structure of the school year, while future qualitative responses showed that many respondents were open to exploring alternative models. Furthermore, it was also noted that variable or longer terms could have a negative effect on both learners and staff (causing fatigue, burnout, and loss of momentum) (Beaufort Research, 2022).
- 2.4 The present piece of work was carried out by Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS) as part of a PhD internship and aimed to update a previously published piece of Welsh Government research. In 2021, a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) was carried out which sought to review evidence relating to changes to the school year and alternative calendars (Hughes, 2022). Evidence published in the last ten years

was reviewed and, in brief, it was found that it was almost impossible to answer many of the research questions due to the lack of published studies available and the lack of consistency of findings. As such, recommendations were made that high quality evidence gathering and evaluation should be written into future proposed programmes of change to the school calendar in Wales.

Research Questions

2.5 The rationale behind the current strand of work was twofold. Firstly, it sought to supplement the earlier report by providing an update on the literature published since the work was conducted. Secondly, it also aimed to include a qualitative fieldwork aspect to provide UK-specific context to the research questions. The following research questions were asked of both strands:

1. How does the current school year impact learners and are there differences across certain groups?
2. Does the current school calendar contribute to a widened disadvantage gap?
3. Does momentum of student learning stall over school breaks?
4. Across the UK, to what extent have maintained schools moved to a two-week break in the autumn term?
5. For maintained schools with a two-week break in the autumn term, have other breaks been shorted to accommodate this longer break?
6. How does/can the school calendar:
 - a. Mitigate the effects of disadvantage?
 - b. Improve learner progression & attainment?
 - c. Support learner & workforce wellbeing?
 - d. Better align with modern life?

There was also a secondary focus on:

1. What 'in break' provision is available for young people, including provision that is suitable for disabled learners?
2. How might school transport be impacted by changes to the school year?

3. Methodology

3.1 The approach to answering the research questions involved two different methods of investigation: a rapid review of the evidence, and a series of interviews with education stakeholders at local authorities across England and Scotland.

Rapid evidence assessment

3.2 REAs are a type of evidence synthesis that is more structured than a literature review but are not as exhaustive as a systematic review.

3.3 The Welsh Government Library service conducted the literature search for this review. The purpose of this review was to update the results of a previously conducted search (Hughes, 2022) and, as such, utilised many of the same key search terms around alternative calendars and changes to the school calendar. However, due to the inclusion of new areas of research (such as those around mitigating disadvantage), further search terms were added. A list of key search terms and databases searched can be found in Appendix A and B.

3.4 This review intended to both update the previously published REA, while also broadening some of the original research questions. As such, inclusion criteria relating to date of publication had to satisfy one or both of the following conditions:

- the study was published after June 2021
- when looking at questions that were not part of the original search, the study must have been published from 2013 onwards.

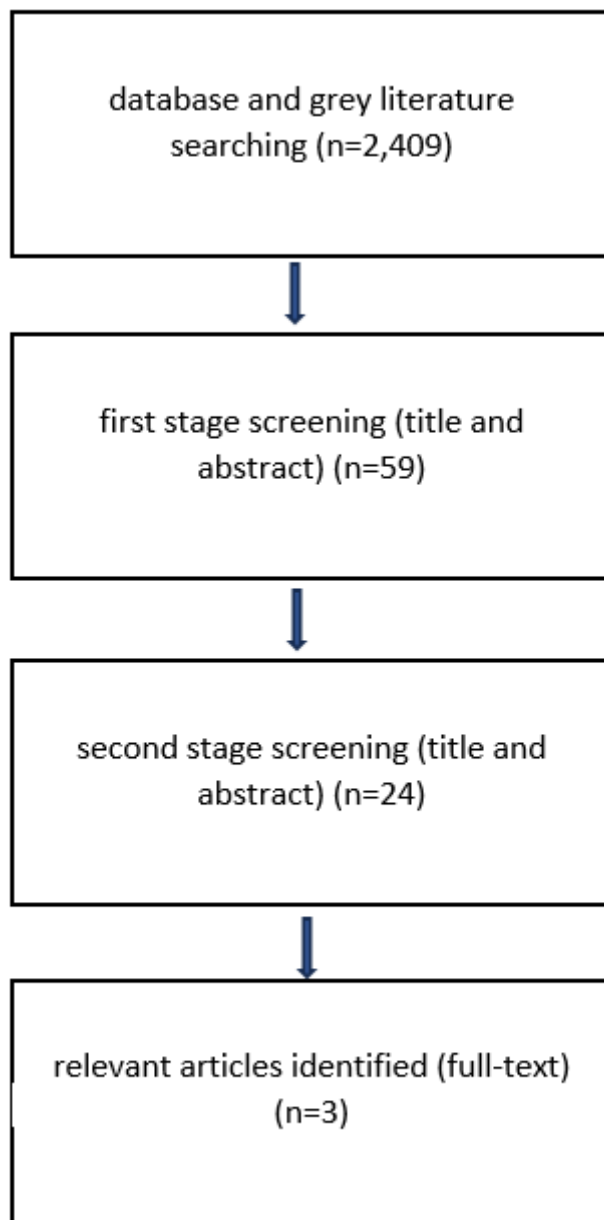
3.5 Searches were conducted between 26 January and 20 February 2023. Studies were included if they were published in either English or Welsh. Journal articles, government reports, and grey literature were included in the results. In total, the search produced 59 results. Of these, only three were published after 2021 and thereby met the criteria.

3.6 Figure 1 illustrates the process of this review. Due to the rapid nature of this review, a comprehensive approach to reference management was not employed. As such, the total number of articles found from the database and grey literature search (step one of figure 1) is more of an estimation rather than an exact. This is due to

duplicates that emerged from the search not being recorded, nor were sites that were lightly browsed rather than systematically searched.

- 3.7 Results from the search were subject to a two-factor screening process. Initially, all studies that emerged as part of the search were screened by their title and abstract for their relevance to the request questions by a member of the library team. Studies were then assigned a priority level of one, two, or three. In short, studies assigned a priority level of one (n=16) were based on data collected from more than one setting or were review articles. Studies given priority two (n=27) represented a broader selection of references, mostly consisting of case studies or articles from professional publications. Lastly, studies assigned a priority of three (n=16) were deemed to be more peripheral to the research questions or only covered some aspects of the search subjects.
- 3.8 During the second stage of the screening process, references were then screened for either inclusion or exclusion by a second reader using the titles and abstracts. Lastly, papers were read in full to confirm inclusion. References were excluded for several reasons, such as if they did not report original research (such as blog posts or reviews of research). Most often, papers were excluded because they were either not directly relevant to the research questions (for example, school day length, after school programmes, or home-schooling initiatives), or were just outside of the research remit (summer schools run by private sector organisations as opposed to local authority run schemes). In total, three studies were identified to be included for analysis.

Figure 1: Flow diagram of the literature review screening process



Stakeholder interviews

3.9 Interviews were held from March to May 2023, with a total of nine interviews with stakeholders from two local authorities in England and seven from Scotland conducted. Interviewees were stakeholders whose position in the local authority meant they were involved in some way with education planning at a higher management level. In total, 12 professionals were interviewed.

- 3.10 The sample of interest were education stakeholders who worked in LAs where changes to the school calendar had been made. Due to the rapid nature of this piece of work, we were unable to explore just how many local authorities across the UK have made changes to the structure of their school calendar. As such, we do not know what percent of the target population this sample represents.
- 3.11 In most cases, purposive sampling was employed, with potential interviewees recruited via the professional networks of Welsh Government colleagues who had contacts at other organisations. Initially, an introductory email was sent to potential participants giving information about the Welsh Government's Programme for Government and the aim of exploring reforms to school term dates and asking if they would participate in an interview on the subject.
- 3.12 If respondents agreed, then prior to interviews taking place, participants were issued with a privacy notice, which explained how their data would be stored, security, confidentiality, and the anonymisation process. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and, the start of each interview, participants were asked to verbally consent to taking part in the interview and to being recorded.
- 3.13 After each interview, the interview guide was reviewed and adjustments were made as deemed necessary, with questions either adjusted for clarity or additional lines of enquiry included. A copy of the final interview guide can be found in Annex C.
- 3.14 Interviews lasted between 17 – 33 minutes, with an average of 22 minutes per interview. In total, 199 minutes of interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymised by the researcher. Interviews were first transcribed using an automatic transcription function, and then read through a second time to check for any errors.
- 3.15 Analysis of interviews broadly followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis. Briefly, thematic analysis is used as a "method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79) and involves six steps. These are: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and report writing.

4. Findings

Rapid evidence assessment

- 4.1 In total, three papers were included as part of this review. It was unsurprising that, given the limited time frame this review focused on, very few papers that were directly relevant to the research questions had been published since this topic was last investigated. As such, no substantial analysis could be conducted on the included papers. Instead, evidence has been extracted from where findings are indirectly relevant to the topic of interest.
- 4.2 All evidence related in some way to 'in-break' provision, with an emphasis on the summer holidays. In this case, interest was focused on provision offered by the school itself or by the local authority (or location equivalent), as opposed to privately run groups such as summer camps.

Mitigating disadvantage

- 4.3 Child Poverty Action Group and Parentkind (2022) investigated parents' and carers' views on the length of the school year in Wales and what they would like to see offered in the future. In total, 6,843 parents and carers responded to the online survey, with the majority (n = 5,350) having their youngest child in primary school. Of the sample, 24.5 per cent were either receiving or were in the process of applying for means-tested benefits and were classified as 'lower income families' in the analysis.
- 4.4 Over half of respondents (56 per cent) were supportive of a more evenly spread year and, when looking specifically at lower income families, this number increased to 59 per cent. When asked why they supported a more even school year, parents and carers stated reasons such as reducing the need for respite care, ensuring that ongoing support needs were met, and maintaining routine for children.
- 4.5 Families that reported struggles over the summer break (either cost or childcare related) were also more likely to be in favour of a shorter summer break (72 per cent), compared to the 29 per cent of families who did not report such issues. Additionally, families on lower incomes were also in favour of the opportunity to access free childcare over the summer period. When discussing the provision for

children with additional needs, one respondent commented that there is a 'severe lack' (p.6) of in-break childcare available for children with higher needs.

- 4.6 Another study, conducted by Kreamer et al., (2022), used qualitative methods to understand teachers' perceptions of student involvement in a virtual summer writing camp. Staff worked in high-needs secondary schools (defined as Title 1 schools where all students receive free or reduced-cost lunch) that had an ongoing partnership with a federal college-access programme (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)). The research aimed to show ways in which schools and organisations can support the social and emotional needs of high-risk students. Nine teachers and three project facilitators took part in the research.
- 4.7 While this piece of research was not directly relevant to the research questions posed, in an interview one of the facilitators spoke about their initial concerns over student participation. They were surprised that a virtual approach 'opened up opportunities' as students did not need to worry about either transportation or attending to their other responsibilities within their home.

Student learning loss and wellbeing

- 4.8 The Department for Education (2022) published findings from a piece of work conducted by CooperGibson Research where they provided funding to secondary schools in England to create face-to-face summer schools during the 2021 summer holidays. The aim was to try and alleviate learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students were asked to complete online surveys before (n = 5,536) and after (n = 6,437) attending summer school. The majority of the sample was composed of pupils transitioning into year seven (pre = 88.0 per cent, post = 89.5 per cent), but also included pupils in other year groups. School surveys were also collected, which were completed by senior school leaders (n = 440 schools).
- 4.9 On average, schools delivered 6.6 days of summer school. When asked how confident they felt about starting the new academic year, prior to summer school, 18 per cent of students said they felt 'completely confident'. This then grew to 23 per cent after attending the summer school. When engaging with third-party organisations to deliver summer school activities, 84 per cent felt it was easy (either

extremely or somewhat) to find the right organisations to work with, and 91 per cent felt they could agree on what activities should be delivered.

- 4.10 Over half (53 per cent) of schools responded that they thought the summer schools had been 'extremely effective' at improving pupil wellbeing. However, only 11 per cent felt that the summer schools had been equally as effective at improving academic attainment.

Stakeholder interviews

- 4.11 Findings were categorised into three primary themes, with subthemes (table 1). In summary, all local authorities had made changes to their October half-term by extending its length, with the vast majority moving to a two-week break (n=8).
- 4.12 Two local authorities had also moved from having a variable Easter break to one that has fixed dates, with the Easter break being taken in the first week of April (in one case, this holiday was renamed as a spring break, rather than being associated with Easter).
- 4.13 Additionally, one local authority had recently been actively looking at implementing a more evenly spread academic year. While a consultation on these changes resulted in a decision not to alter the calendar, the interviewees thoughts on this process are included in the themes below.
- 4.14 In order to ensure that the structure of the school year maintained the required number of learning sessions per year, school calendars were often restructured so that the summer break started later.

Table 1: Themes and subthemes resulting from thematic analysis.

Theme	Subthemes
1. Reasons for making changes to the school year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Local authority context ➤ Student attendance ➤ Availability for family travel ➤ Learning loss ➤ Alignment with neighbouring authorities ➤ Student and staff wellbeing ➤ Disadvantage
2. Consultation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Length of consultation ➤ Distribution of materials ➤ Options ➤ Advance notice ➤ Response
3. Stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School staff ➤ Trade unions ➤ Parents ➤ Young people

Reasons for making changes to the school year

4.15 When discussing reasons for making changes to their school calendar, many interviewees provided some context around their local authority. This included geographical location and levels of deprivation. For some areas, the changes to the school calendar were fairly recent, happening in the last few years. For others, they had been long-standing (upwards of fifteen years), with their roots tied to traditional agricultural practices. In all but one case, changes to the year school were possible under existing legislation. For the local authority where this was not true, the interviewee was required to write to their government and request an amendment to legislation to be made.

4.16 For the local authorities that had made their changes more recently, student attendance was a frequently cited reason.

‘We found that attendances just leading up to the October holidays was quite low and when we came back after the holidays, it was lower still.’ (Interview 3)

4.17 Interviewees discussed the fact that many families are able to travel and take a holiday (often abroad) during the October half-term. Interviewees commented that it can often be cheaper for families to go on holiday during this time and provides an alternative for families who may not be able to afford to go away during the summer. Furthermore, for island local authorities, the extended break allows families to travel to mainland areas without this cutting into their holiday time. All interviewees that spoke about attendance noted that they saw a marked increase after changes to the half-term had been made, with a drop in families taking holidays during term time.

4.18 Student learning loss (or the reversal of academic progress), especially during the long summer break, was a concern voiced by many interviewees. Students would be reassessed when the new school year started again and often need to revisit elements of learning that occurred in the previous year.

‘We are aware that there's quite a lot of data evidence that children ... kind of lose an awful lot of their learning over that very long summer break.’ (Interview 2)

4.19 It was also noted that returning to learning and teaching was easier for students when the summer break had been reduced slightly.

4.20 One of the most discussed reasons for making changes to the school calendar was alignment with neighbouring local authorities. Interviewees were very aware of the fact that, in many instances, parents may have children who attend school in different local authority areas. Misalignment of term dates was a common concern for both teachers and parents as not only did it affect the possibility for families to take their children on holiday, but it also caused issues with childcare. As such, interviewees worked to ensure their own authority's term dates lined up with their closest neighbouring authorities by consulting with them before term dates were published.

- 4.21 Another reason cited when discussing the possibility of extending the autumn half-term was the overall length of the autumn term. The long stretch of the term, the winter season, and the shorter days were all given as reasons for reduced wellbeing during that term, and staff burnout was a concern for many. One interviewee noted an increase in fixed-term exclusions during this point in the year, with both students and teachers unable to ‘manage things that they might have managed earlier.’ (Interview 2).
- 4.22 Additionally, wellbeing over the summer break was also considered. For families who were in contact with children’s social care services, it was felt that the summer break was a long stretch of time and could often have a detrimental effect to both parental and child wellbeing.
- ‘For children that are looked after, or children that have additional support needs, or children where we have a vulnerability where they’re on the child protection register, that long six-week period is quite significant.’ (Interview 6)
- 4.23 To try and mitigate this disadvantage, some local authorities had managed to secure funding to run holiday clubs, host a social worker, and provide meals to students out of term time.
- 4.24 School transport was also spoken about, albeit briefly. One interviewee commented that the local authority’s transport team had requested that changes to the calendar not fall during the exam period. This was a cost saving request, so they would not need to transport a limited number of students.

Consultation process

- 4.25 Interviewees were asked to provide details about the consultation process that was employed when looking at making changes to the school calendar. In general, consultations were open for between four to six weeks and were advertised using a variety of methods, including: school/governor newsletters, local authority website, emailed to each school in the area, social media channels, in-person drop-in sessions, early years service providers, as well as to neighbouring local authorities for them to distribute within their own networks. Online surveys were the most popular method of data collection. As part of these consultations, stakeholders set

out several options (usually two or three) that respondents could comment on and indicate a preference. All interviewees spoke about their most recent wave of consultations, where they sought comments on changes that had been made and whether these changes should be maintained or reverted. For instance, while a two-week October half-term was in place, some authorities would present a consultation option of returning to a single week break, in order to gauge public interest.

4.26 When term dates were being set, all interviewees stated that these are usually done between two and four years in advance of the next academic year.

‘It’s really important to get that well in advance of a year. If it was me suggesting it to a new government, like, don’t do it for next academic year. Families will have holidays booked. You have to look at it for that longer, for the following academic year.’ (Interview 5)

4.27 In terms of responses to the public consultations, engagement varied. While one local authority spoke about receiving an unprecedented number of responses to their consultation on proposed changes to the school calendar, others had a low response rate.

4.28 Also, while the outcomes of the consultations showed that respondents were in favour of the proposed changes, there were those that voiced concerns with them. One local authority shared the anonymised responses to their latest consultation, which indicated some of the most common reasons against a longer October break included issues with childcare arrangements, poorer weather, as well as the potential negative impact on student learning. Interviewees reflected openly about any opposing comments and worked to address these when making a final decision about term dates.

‘We were honest about the negatives, but we explained how we had addressed and mitigated as much of that as possible so that, when it came to a vote by elected members of the council, the decision was carried.’ (Interview 4)

Stakeholder engagement

- 4.29 Briefly, interviewees spoke about the wide range of stakeholders they worked to engage, some before any changes to the school calendar were implemented. Many felt it was imperative to talk to both teachers and trade unions to discuss the rationale behind the proposed changes before the formal consultation was released. In almost all cases, decisions around changes to the school year were ultimately made by a local authority committee. These always included elected council members and, between local authorities, these could also include representatives from youth voice groups, trade unions, teacher unions, and churches.
- 4.30 One local authority spoke about work they did prior to starting the consultation process, where stakeholders were asked to consider how they would like the school calendar to be structured.

‘We did actually a hands-on exercise to say well, how do you want the 195 days [including in-service training days] to fit within the academic year?’

(Interview 9)

Parting thoughts

- 4.31 Overall, all interviewees considered the changes their local authority had made to the school year to be a success. While they acknowledged that it can take time for people to adapt to changes, especially when they differ from the established routine, eventually these changes are embraced.

‘It seems to have settled now. It seems to be kind of normal across the district and not as much concern.’ (Interview 2)

5. Limitations

- 5.1 As expected, there were few studies that arose from the 'update' aspect of the REA part of this research. Given the short time frame searched, this was unsurprising. However, given the small number of articles returned, as well as the fact that only one of these directly addressed the research questions of the present study, it is hard to gauge the weight of this derived evidence. Similarly, for the two studies conducted outside of Wales, findings must be treated with caution as they may not be generalisable to the Welsh setting. What is interesting, though, are the findings relating to 'in-break' provision. While this was not a key focus in this study, the literature might not have been comprehensive enough to address this type of provision and its impact. As such, further study exploring approaches and the effect of 'in-break' provision could be beneficial.
- 5.2 As for the interview strand of this piece of work, in some instances, changes to the school year had been implemented prior to the interviewee taking up their position at the local authority. As such, recall of the facts around the changes may have been hindered. There is also the potential for bias in the purposive sampling method used (Sharma, 2017). Due to the low number of participants available and then recruited, the sampling method had to be pragmatic. As such, all respondents who agreed to be interviewed and who met the criteria of interested were included in the research.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This piece of work sought to address key questions around the current school year in Wales, as well as investigate areas of the UK where changes have been made. While not all of the research questions have been answered directly, some conclusions can be drawn from the findings.
- 6.2 There is some evidence that the current school year pattern can have an effect on student learning loss and attendance, as was seen in both the evidence review and the interviews with key stakeholders. While learning loss over the summer was a concern for interviewees and evidenced in the REA, stakeholders felt this was alleviated somewhat by the extended autumn half-term causing a reduction to the summer break.
- 6.3 The current school year may also contribute to a widened disadvantage gap. The review indicated that parents and carers were in favour of a more evenly spread school year for reasons such as reducing the need for respite care. In the qualitative work, not only did interviewees state that long stretches of time (such as the summer holidays) were a concern for families in contact with children's social services, but also that many families find paying for childcare or a holiday during this period to be difficult.
- 6.4 Both student and staff wellbeing were thought to increase with the two-week October term, as found in the interviews.
- 6.5 Of the nine local authorities interviewed, eight had opted for maintained schools to move to a two-week break in the autumn term. It is also important to note that, for many of these local authorities, the change was in line with neighbouring districts. Often, proposed term dates were discussed with these neighbouring authorities to ensure they were aligned before being set out. This piece of work did not culminate in a comprehensive list of what local authorities across the UK have moved to a two-week autumn break for maintained schools.
- 6.6 There was limited data around 'in-break' provision for young people. From the interviews, a few local authorities spoke about securing funding to provide holiday clubs and meals outside of term time. Provision during the summer break was also

discussed in findings from the literature review. However, the findings from this strand of work were not comprehensive, so it may be prudent for a further study to explore the approaches and impact of this.

- 6.7 School transport was mentioned very briefly, and this indicates that there could be an impact on this sector if changes in the school year are made.

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Annex A: Literature search terms

Free text terms

school-year* (ERIC), school W1 year* (BEI), "school year"; school-day* (ERIC), school W1 day* (BEI), "school day"; school-term* (ERIC), school W1 term* (BEI), "school term"; structure; length; extend*; school; teach*; learn*; asymmetric; week*; timetable*; term*; day*; week*; schedule; day-school-week* (ERIC), "day school" W1 week* (BEI); balanced-school* (ERIC), balanced W1 school* (BEI); compressed-school* (ERIC), compressed W1 school* (BEI); year-round-school* (ERIC), "year round" W1 school* (BEI); "wrap around care"; out-of-school-activit* (ERIC), "out of school activities" (BEI); instruction; classroom; time; hours; extend*; additional; summer; program*; "after school"; afterschool; school*; schedule*; hours; language; immersion; bilingual; trilingual; multilingual; plurilingual; education; learning; classroom*; teaching; special; education*; "additional learning needs"; learning-disab*; learning-difficult*; "learning problems"; remedial; gifted; "compensatory ; ducation"; developmental; intellectual; cognitive; disab*; childcare; "child care"; working; childmind*; daycare; "day care"; child-care-provider*; before-school*; breakfast; homework; club; "looked after"; care; vulnerable; child*-in-need; "supported housing"; foster*; refugee*; asyl*; migrant*; immigrant*; displaced; emigrant; outmigrant*; gyps*; roma*; traveller*; GRT; gips*; sinti; rroma*; pavee*; kale*; kala*; valshanange*; efsm; free-school-meal*; poverty; free-school-lunch*; free-school-breakfast*; "free school food"; free-school-dinner*; "free school milk"; young; teen*; child; carer*; children; family; "under 18"; caregiv*; "as a second language"; "as a new language"; "second language learning"; "as an additional language"; "for speakers of other languages"; EAL; ESL; ENL; ESOL; WAL; WSL; WNL; WSOL; SSL; Working; Caregiver*; Extended; "school week"; Compressed; Extracurricular; School hours; "extra curricular"

Thesaurus terms

ERIC

"School Schedules"; "Year Round Schools"; "Summer Programs"; "Summer Schools"; "After School Programs"; "Schools"; "School Schedules"; "Second Language Learning"; "Second Language Programs"; "Bilingual Education"; "Multilingualism"; "Education"; "Learning";

"Classrooms"; "Instruction"; "Special Education"; "Learning Disabilities"; "Learning Problems"; "Remedial Instruction"; "Gifted"; "Compensatory Education"; "Developmental Disabilities"; "Intellectual Disability"; "Child Care"; "Employed Parents"; "Child Caregivers"; "Schools"; "Child Caregivers"; "Breakfast Programs"; "Child Care"; "Foster Care"; "Migrants"; "Poverty"; "Second Languages"

British Education Index

"SCHOOL schedules"; "BLOCK scheduling (Education)"; "FLEXIBLE scheduling in education"; "QUARTER system in education"; "SCHOOL lunch breaks"; "SCHOOL vacations"; "SCHOOL week"; "SCHOOL year"; "SEMESTER system in education"; "TRIMESTER system in education"; "SCHOOL day"; "CLASS periods"; "SCHOOL start times"; "YEAR-round schools"; "SUMMER schools"; "TEACHERS -- Out-of-school activities"; "SCHOOLS"; "AFRICAN American schools"; "ALTERNATIVE schools"; "BILINGUAL schools"; "BOARDING schools"; "BRITISH schools"; "CATHEDRAL schools"; "CHARITY-schools"; "CHARTER schools"; "COEDUCATIONAL schools"; "COMPUTER programming schools"; "COOPERATIVE schools"; "DAY schools"; "DISADVANTAGED schools"; "EFFECTIVE schools"; "ELEMENTARY schools"; "ETHNIC schools"; "EUROPEAN schools"; "FAILING schools"; "GRANT-maintained schools"; "GULEN movement schools"; "GYMNASIUMS (Educational institutions)"; "HOSPITAL schools"; "INSTITUTIONAL schools"; "INSTRUCTIONAL materials centers"; "INTERNATIONAL schools"; "IRISH Gaelic language schools"; "JEWISH religious schools"; "LABORATORY schools"; "LANGUAGE schools"; "MISSION schools"; "MOBILE schools"; "MONTESSORI schools"; "OPEN-air schools"; "PRIMARY schools"; "PRIVATE schools"; "PUBLIC schools"; "REFUGEE camp schools"; "RELIGIOUS schools"; "RURAL schools"; "SECONDARY schools"; "SINGLE sex schools"; "SMALL schools"; "SPECIAL education schools"; "SUBURBAN schools"; "TEXTILE schools"; "TRADITIONAL schools"; "URBAN schools"; "VACATION schools"; "VIRTUAL schools"; "VOCATIONAL schools"; "AFTER school programs"; "AFTER school sports"; "CHILD care"; "CAREGIVER-child relationships"; "CHILD rearing"; "SCHOOL-age child care"; "SCHOOL-based child care"; "CHILDREN of working parents"; "CHILDREN of working mothers"; "LATCHKEY children"; "DAY care centers"; "PLAY groups"; "PLAY schools"; "FOREIGN language education"; "AUDIOLINGUAL method (Language teaching)"; "COMMUNICATION in foreign language"

education"; "COMPUTER assisted language instruction"; "ENGLISH language education"; "ERROR analysis in foreign language education"; "FLUENCY (Language learning)"; "IMMERSION method (Language teaching)"; "INTERLANGUAGE (Language learning)"; "IRISH Gaelic language -- Study & teaching"; "ITALIAN language -- Study & teaching"; "LANGUAGE & languages -- Self-instruction"; "LANGUAGE ability"; "LANGUAGE ability testing"; "LANGUAGE transfer (Language learning)"; "MODERN languages -- Study & teaching"; "RHETORIC -- Study & teaching"; "SIGN language -- Study & teaching"; "SPEECH education"; "STRATEGY Inventory for Language Learning"; "STUDY & teaching of the Greek language"; "TELEVISION in foreign language education"

Welsh language terms

Ysgol; dosbarth; Ymestyn ymgysylltu / "Ymestyn ymgysylltu"; dysgu; iaith; ieithyddol; fel Ail Iaith / "fel Ail Iaith"; ar gyfer Siaradwyr Ieithoedd Eraill / "ar gyfer Siaradwyr Ieithoedd Eraill"; gofal; plant agored i niwed / "plant agored i niwed"; plant mewn angen / "plant mewn angen"; plenty; tai chymorth / "tai chymorth"; tai lle ceir cefnogaeth / "tai lle ceir cefnogaeth"; maethu; mabwysiadu; plant mewn perygl / "plant mewn perygl"; ffoadur; ceisiwr lloches / "ceisiwr lloches"; mudwr; mewnfudwr; pobl wedi'u dadleoli / "pobl wedi'u adleoli"; ymfudwr; sipsi; sipsiwn; teithiwr; brechwast; tlodi; gofalwr ifanc / "gofalwr ifanc"; gofalydd ifanc / "gofalydd ifanc"

Annex B: Databases and grey literature searched

American Association of Caregiving Youth; BASE (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine); British Education Index; Education Policy Institute; Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC); Estyn; EThOS; Eurocarers; Friends, Families and Travellers; Google Scholar; GOV.UK; Gwerddon; Little Dreamers; National Association of Head Teachers; Parentkind; Teacher Reference Center; The Curriculum Journal; Traveller Movement; Voices from Care Cymru; Wales Journal of Education; Welsh Government Library Catalogue; Who Cares? Scotland; Young Carers in Schools

Annex C: Interview guide

1. Introduction and consent process
2. Changes to the school year
 - a. What changes to the school calendar year have been made at your local authority?
 - i. FOLLOW-UP: How was it decided which half-term to change?
 - b. Have other breaks been shortened to accommodate these changes?
3. Overview of process
 - a. Could you give me a brief step-by-step overview of what the process was to implement these changes?
 - i. PROMPT: What stakeholders needed to be involved in this process?
Buy-in?
 - ii. PROMPT: Timeline of changes
 - iii. PROMPT: Was it possible under existing regulations and legislation?
4. Reasons for making changes
 - a. What was the rationale behind the changes? Was it due to a particular issue?
 - i. PROMPT: Learning loss, disadvantage, etc.
5. Consultation process
 - a. How long was the consultation for these changes open?
 - b. What levels of engagement were received?
 - i. PROMPT: How many responses were received?
 - c. FOLLOW-UP: Were you focussed on parents / those in education, or did you engage with other sectors (for instance, tourism / childcare)?
 - d. How was this publicised / what communications were sent out?
 - e. Any noticeable / frequent feedback from stakeholders?
 - f. Did you receive any opposition / immediate feedback about the proposed changes?
6. Post-implementation
 - a. Has there been any evaluative work conducted after the changes had been implemented?
 - i. If no, are there any plans to do so?

- b. What learning has been taken away from implementing these changes?
- c. Have these changes been considered a success?
 - i. FOLLOW-UP: How would you define success in this instance?

7. Next steps

- a. Are there any other changes in relation to the school year being proposed / considered?
- b. Will further consultations be held to determine if the changes are still wanted by stakeholders (if not spoken about in the post-implementation section)?
- c. Do you have anything else you would like to say on this topic that you think is important but we haven't asked?

8. End of interview