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Evaluation of Regional Collaborative Working:

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Evaluation of Regional Collaborative Working

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

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Summary

Background

1. In June 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned Cardiff Business School, Shared Intelligence (SI) and IFF Research to conduct an evaluation of regional collaborative projects it has supported through various funding mechanisms, in order to improve and broaden understanding of the effectiveness and outcomes of this form of collaboration.
2. The evaluation aimed to:
 - assess, as far as possible, the outcomes for citizens and service users, and financial savings and efficiencies, resulting from the funded projects; and
 - identify processes and other factors that contribute to the achievement of these outcomes.
3. The methods for undertaking the evaluation comprised:
 - Interviews with Regional Collaboration Fund (RCF) project managers – to provide an overview of all RCF projects.
 - Five in-depth case studies comprising:
 - Western Bay Health and Social Care Programme (RCF and ESF/WLGA).
 - North Wales Economic Ambition Board (RCF).
 - Regional Shared School Improvement Service Hub Integration (RCF).
 - ICT Enabled Schools Transformation Programme (RCF).
 - North Wales Legal Services Regional Collaboration Project (ESF/ WLGA).
 - A meta-review of the light-touch case studies carried out by Data Unit Wales on other ESF-LSB funded, WLGA-led regional projects.

Findings

4. We carried out a thematic analysis of the findings from the five in-depth case studies to assess the outcomes from regional collaboration and identify the enablers and barriers to achieving these. In addition, we drew on evidence about

regional collaboration from the ESF-LSB Project evaluation, where relevant, for comparative purposes.

5. The analysis echoed the findings of the ESF-LSB Project in showing that collaborative capacity includes cultural and behavioural change as well as new structures, systems and processes. This is particularly true for ambitious transformational change projects that involve a number of different organisations developing the capacity and capability for effective regional working in complex policy areas.
6. Most case studies developed some type(s) of formal collaboration agreements at a relatively early stage of their project and while this was helpful in clarifying expectations, they found that they also needed to build the trust that is so important to make collaboration work in practice. Three approaches that helped facilitate this were: senior officers modelling collaborative behaviour (e.g. by managing an inter-authority work-stream); providing training, mentoring and/or coaching for staff working on collaborative projects; and enabling better links between staff from different authorities through, for example, a platform to encourage news about collaborative working.
7. Our analysis has shown that senior strategic leadership of regional collaboration is essential – and that this is most effective when combined with other, complementary types of leadership at different levels (i.e. distributed leadership). These include:
 - strategic leadership of the partnership – to drive and give credibility to the change strategy - from senior managers and elected members;
 - strategic leadership of partner organisations – to prioritise the necessary financial and staff resources to play an effective collaborative role - from senior managers and cabinet members/portfolio holders;
 - operational leadership of the partnership – from Project Director/Manager; and
 - operational leadership of project themes/service areas – from Heads of Service.
8. Our evidence strongly suggests that the dedicated role played by the project manager is vital and an important factor in determining the success of a project. This role includes operational leadership (e.g. driving and promoting the change project, motivating and enabling staff to participate) and more transactional management to ensure co-ordination and effective project management systems.

9. All five case studies showed how collaboration had driven – and been enabled by – a variety of types of organisational and service change. These range from changes to practice within a specific service and/or organisation (e.g. production of a Regional Skills and Employment Plan), to new mechanisms for collaboration and co-ordination between and across authorities (e.g. such as joint commissioning or using common software to support school improvement), and the establishment of integrated regional services, such as single points of contact for adult services.
10. These types of changes can act as a step towards improving outcomes for citizens and represent improvements in the infrastructure and collaborative capacity (through new structures, processes and behaviours) that are necessary to sustain change.
11. In practice, there was little evidence that the ESF-WLGA or RCF-funded projects have directly resulted in improved outcomes for citizens. There were exceptions to this with evidence of, for example, increased user satisfaction and improved quality of life from a more ‘joined-up’ and preventative approach to adult services and associated savings in NHS and complex care budgets in a case study that had used RCF to lever insignificant other resources. Overall, however, projects either hadn’t specified their desired outcomes clearly to start with, and/or found that their plans for achieving change were over-ambitious within the timescale and resources that had been agreed.
12. The involvement of the Welsh Government in our case studies varied widely from limited engagement beyond the formal requirement to provide quarterly reports on progress, to regular contact. This active interest was appreciated by the projects, although they felt that reporting requirements could be improved and policy changes (e.g. in transport and local government reform) could be better communicated to support regional collaboration. Likewise, some projects suggested that closer liaison between different Welsh Government departments would support ‘joining up on the ground’.
13. The RCF resource paid for dedicated regional posts across our four case studies, which provided additional capacity to speed up existing areas of regional working and develop new initiatives. It also enabled projects to bring in specialist capacity according to need. One case study combined RCF with other Welsh Government

funding which helped overcome some of the inflexibility caused by the short-term nature of RCF.

14. Learning has taken place in three main ways within the case study areas: within the project and regional partnership; drawing on other regions' or partnerships' practice in similar policy areas; and sharing learning with other regional projects, including those funded through RCF and the Welsh Government.
15. Learning within partnerships and regions was clearly important in helping to embed new ways of working. Other factors that may influence the sustainability of projects are vulnerability to public sector budget cuts, uncertainty about local government reform, and over-reliance on particular individuals and their informal relationships.
16. This leads us to conclude that one of the key challenges is not only to find and use opportunities to disseminate and communicate 'good practice' on regional collaboration to the Welsh Government and local government sector, but to ensure that it effects changes in behaviour and results in good practice being transferred and embedded.

Recommendations

17. We used the thematic analysis of our findings to develop conclusions and recommendations to the Welsh Government and its partners delivering collaborative projects. In summary, these include:
 - Taking practical steps to strengthen both the senior strategic leadership and the political governance and scrutiny of any collaborative working arrangement.
 - Developing a set of collaborative project management competencies (knowledge, skills and behaviours), offering project manager training across the public sector and improving processes for recruiting project managers.
 - Placing greater emphasis on arrangements for governance, accountability, review and reflective learning in funding applications and project monitoring.
 - The Welsh Government clearly articulating the aims of any new funding scheme and how it supports and links to current policy initiatives, providing sufficient time for organisations to respond to calls for proposals in a considered manner, and designing reporting arrangements which are useful for project review and accountability to both the recipient of funding and the Welsh Government.

- Organisations delivering collaborative projects providing evidence on whether there are efficiencies to be made by establishing regional systems, setting clear expectations of how each partner is going to contribute to and benefit from the collaboration, setting measurable and realistic outcomes and targets, and considering providing continued funding to support those projects which have produced outcomes or have the strong potential to do so.
- The Welsh Government, as it is in the best position to provide leadership, working with others, in disseminating 'good practice' on regional collaboration to the wider sector to effect change.
- Organisations in receipt of time-limited funding being required to develop legacy plans to sustain and mainstream innovative approaches to delivering outcomes.
- The Welsh Government using this evaluation and other available evidence to review funding arrangements for regional collaboration, support 'bottom-up' transformational change projects in priority service and policy areas, and work with public services to design future collaboration initiatives as a way of improving services, efficiencies and outcomes.

1 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Welsh Government is committed to improving outcomes for citizens and in recent years has recognised collaboration as a vehicle for achieving this. Collaboration can potentially improve service delivery through enabling a more integrated approach between local authorities and other public sector and third sector agencies which better meets citizens' needs. There is also interest in whether collaboration can also generate cost reductions either through efficiencies (through realising economies of scale or reducing duplication) or through more cost-effective ways of delivering services, which can be particularly important in the context of budget reductions and changing patterns of demand.
- 1.2 To this end, the Welsh Government introduced the Regional Collaboration Fund (RCF) in 2013. The RCF is one of two main funding streams designed to support collaborative working between different authorities and/or partnerships (e.g. local government and health services) at a regional level. Fundamentally it was hoped that through better collaborative working (instigated or assisted by this additional financial support), cost savings will be made and service users will benefit from more streamlined, joined-up processes.
- 1.3 Funding for similar projects had already been provided since 2011 by the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Welsh Government and the WLGA Innovation Fund, enabling the ESF-LSB Development and Priority Delivery Project (herein ESF-LSB Project) to include nine regional collaboration projects (Welsh Government 2015a, 2016). WLGA funding for these projects enabled them to cover all local authorities rather than limit the projects to the convergence areas that qualified for ESF.
- 1.4 Regional collaboration has also been a feature of the Welsh Government's Invest to Save Fund (Welsh Government 2014). This is a very different funding model, more akin to a loan than a grant, and so incentivises change in a different way.

Evaluation of Regional Collaborative Working

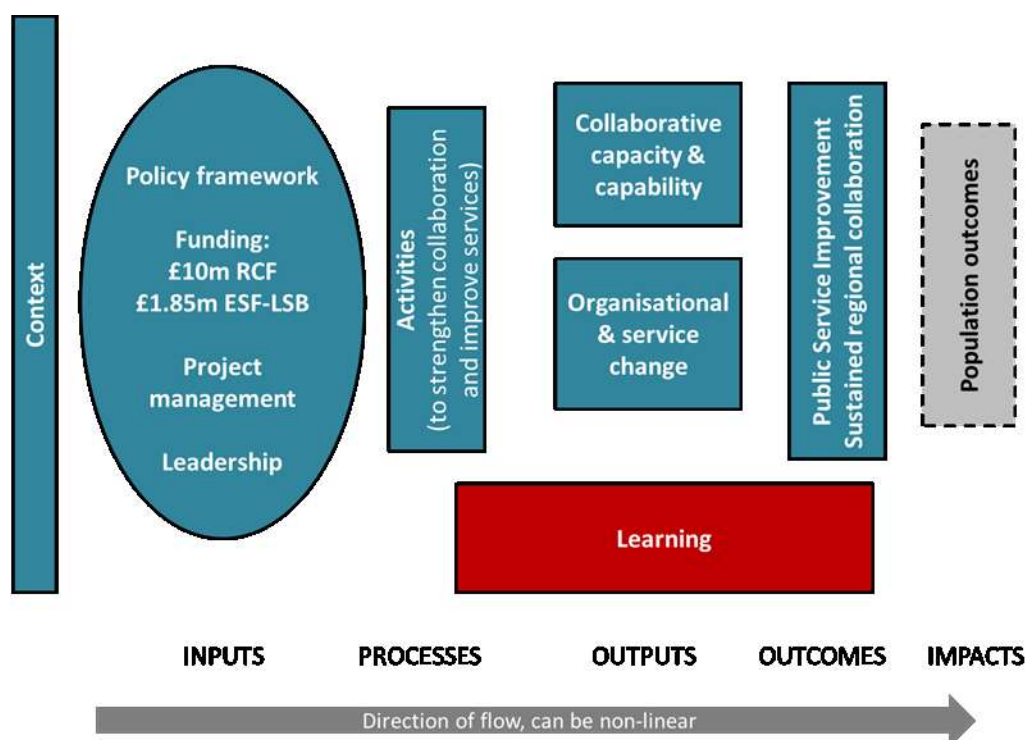
- 1.5 In June 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned Cardiff Business School, Shared Intelligence (SI) and IFF Research to conduct an evaluation of regional collaborative projects it has supported through various funding mechanisms, in order to improve and broaden understanding of the effectiveness and outcomes of this form of collaboration.
- 1.6 This commission followed work that the three organisations had carried out to evaluate the ESF-LSB Project, between 2012 and 2016, which gives some continuity of research on collaboration across funding streams (Welsh Government 2015a, Welsh Government 2016).
- 1.7 The two key objectives of the evaluation were:
 - To examine the processes and implementation of the funding mechanisms, to identify factors that contribute to the achievement of their outcomes.
 - To assess, as far as possible, the outcomes of the regional collaboration projects funded through the ESF-LSB Project and RCF (including outcomes for public services, for service users and any potential impact on the wider population).
- 1.8 During summer 2015, following a three-month pause and review period for the evaluation, the Welsh Government provided additional guidance to the evaluation team about their preferred approach to learning about regional collaboration and their priorities for the evaluation. This guidance emphasised the interest in capturing outcomes for citizens and service users, and financial savings and efficiencies, resulting from regional collaboration.

Evaluation approach

- 1.9 This evaluation has used a theory-based framework to show the contribution of inputs and processes to intended outcomes (with the specific contributions and outcomes potentially linked to the different funding streams). The draft framework, based on the one used for the ESF-LSB Project evaluation is shown in Figure 1.1.

- 1.10 This framework suggests that an increase in collaborative capacity and capability – as well as organisational and service change - will be necessary (although not necessarily sufficient) to lead to sustained regional collaboration and public service improvement.
- 1.11 During the evaluation we have identified outcomes and gained an understanding of how collaborative implementation processes and other factors have contributed to these. We have used these findings to test the underlying assumptions of the RCF specifically, as well as comparing the programme’s rationale, processes and outcomes with those of the regional collaboration projects funded through the ESF-LSB Project and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

Figure 1.1: Draft evaluation framework for regional collaborative working



Key questions for the evaluation

- 1.12 This sort of framework is very useful for identifying the key questions for the evaluation so that we can test out the underlying assumptions and use our findings in a way that is relevant to the Welsh Government, local authorities and partner agencies.
- 1.13 In addition to the framework, we used the findings from our evaluation of the ESF-LSB Project and a series of interviews with RCF project leads at the beginning of this evaluation to identify key questions for the evaluation and inform the selection of case studies.
- 1.14 The key questions included:
- What evidence is there of objective measures of project success, particularly to assess whether and what outcomes have been achieved, both for service users and citizens and through financial efficiencies from collaborative working.
 - How can regional collaboration be made to work effectively? Effective collaboration is intrinsically linked to the success of a project, so further insight into what makes partnerships work – particularly in a regional context. It is also important to understand the barriers to effective partnership working – and how challenges can be overcome – to understand what constitutes good practice and how this can be applied to collaborative working locally and regionally.
 - What are the similarities and differences between different projects' outcomes? How much are these determined by the nature of their funding, the collaborative processes and project management that have been put in place, and the service areas and geographical contexts the projects are operating in?
 - What are the key skills and behaviours that are required for effective project management of regional collaboration? How can these be transferred and/or replicated to build collaborative capacity in local government?
 - How can learning be shared in a way that helps future success? The evaluation framework helps identify the elements that need to be in place (key success factors) and the most effective processes for collaboration to give projects the best chance of succeeding. This will only be of use if future collaboration projects have access to this knowledge at appropriate stages in the collaborative process and the understanding that comes from it can be shared,

not only between project managers but with others involved in the regional partnerships.

- How can the sustainability of projects be secured either through embedding collaborative working as 'business as usual' and/or understanding what helps more specific projects secure the future funding and buy-in that they need to continue?
- What are the policy implications of pursuing collaboration in difficult financial times? How can the Welsh Government ensure messages are being given to local authorities that move beyond short-term funding for collaboration and towards other instruments to encourage groups of authorities to make collaboration work and be sustained organically?

2 Methodology

Methods

2.1 The methods for undertaking the evaluation comprised:

- **Interviews with RCF project managers** – to collect standardised data to provide an overview of all RCF projects and help inform the selection of projects for case study analysis.
- **In-depth case studies:**
 - an in-depth case study of the North Wales Legal Services Regional Collaboration Project, which was funded through the ESF-LSB Project and WLGA; and
 - four in-depth case studies of RCF projects to explore and learn from different types of collaboration.
- **Meta-review:**
 - a meta-review of the light-touch case studies carried out by Data Unit Wales on seven other WLGA-led regional projects (again funded through the ESF-LSB Project and the WLGA) to identify the outcomes achieved and learning generated through regional collaboration.
- **Analysis and reporting** – to bring together the findings from the evaluation to address the key questions in a report to the Welsh Government.

Interviews with RCF project managers

2.2 The telephone interviews with project managers from all RCF projects, listed in Appendix 1, were carried out from December 2014 to March 2015. Analysis of the interviews showed that:

- Overall, **project managers were optimistic about the (realised or potential) success of their projects**. The way in which RCF funding had contributed to this varies according to project circumstances:
 - funding had **enabled** a number of projects to go ahead that may not have done otherwise, even though ideas and plans were in place;

- funding had acted as a **catalyst** that has allowed projects to happen more quickly than they would have done otherwise; the funding had also allowed them to expand their scope of activity;
- occasionally, funding had acted as a **stimulus** to collaboration, where projects that were in the pipeline for one local authority have expanded to involve other authorities and/or services; and
- in a few instances, funding had been used as **bridging finance**, to continue projects that were already running to fill a funding gap before more permanent funding could be sourced.
- Early indications were that **successful collaboration was strongly linked with perceptions of success** for the project as a whole. The scale of collaboration varied between projects; it was generally seen as ‘successful’ although a number of barriers were mentioned.
- **Learning between projects had not been extensive** as might have been hoped for; the extent to which research was conducted to draw on others’ experiences varied widely depending on the tenacity and pro-activeness of the individual project manager, and their own experiences of collaborative project working. This pointed to a general lack of awareness of what else is being done that could be drawn on, and how this might relate to their own project.
- Project managers’ accounts of the likely sustainability of their projects, and the long-term impact they would have on partners, varied considerably. Most confident of a legacy, were projects which were designed to be fixed-term initially to affect longer-term change in the “business as usual” processes of the local authorities and other services involved. Some projects had secured funding either from the partners involved in the project or other funding sources to allow them to continue their specific activities; others were still looking for this funding with varying degrees of optimism over whether it would be found.

2.3 These findings were used to inform the selection of RCF case studies along with the case study lines of enquiry and topic guides.

In-depth case studies

- 2.4 This essentially case study-based methodology was chosen to reflect that the evaluation covered a wide range of regional collaboration projects, which have been funded through different mechanisms and during different timescales. This makes strict comparison of outcomes and the effectiveness of different funding streams very challenging. Instead, the method has focused on the collection and thematic analysis of case studies to identify critical success factors for collaboration to address the key evaluation objectives. We used the substantive in-depth case studies carried out by our own research team as the primary source of data for this analysis. We also drew on case studies of the seven WLGA-led regional projects funded through ESF-LSB. These were carried out by Data Unit Wales on behalf of the WLGA. Although they are narrative and descriptive, rather than evaluative in nature, they provide useful evidence for comparative purposes.
- 2.5 The selection of case studies was made on a range of criteria. Firstly, we selected case studies funded through different mechanisms, namely: the ESF-LSB Project, which funded nine regional projects in conjunction with the WLGA, who hosted and supported the projects; and the Welsh Government's RCF.
- 2.6 From these WLGA-led regional projects, we selected the North Wales Legal Services Regional Collaboration Project, as it had delivered on at least some of its outcomes, had continued beyond the funded period with the support of all authorities involved and hadn't already been used as a case study for the ESF-LSB Project evaluation.
- 2.7 Within the RCF, we elected to sample four projects, which we chose to provide a balance of regions, policy/service themes and size of projects. The five projects are introduced briefly below. A summary of their aims and activities is shown in Appendix 2.
- 2.8 The case study fieldwork included between five and 12 semi-structured interviews with key individuals from the councils and partner organisations involved in the project. The number and specific roles of interviewees depended on the size and nature of each case study. In all projects we interviewed a senior councillor, a Chief Executive/Chief Officer, the Project Lead/Director, the Project Manager and

a representative from a relevant partner organisation such as the Health Board, employers' organisation, school etc.

- 2.9 We undertook a thematic analysis of the case studies based on the areas included in the topic guide. The findings from this are discussed in Chapter 3.

North Wales Legal Services Regional Collaboration Project

- 2.10 This project built on a history of collaborative working across legal services in the six local authorities: Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham. Prior to the project's ESF bid in 2012, there was a Heads of Legal Services Group, which had taken a collaborative approach to sharing information and service planning across the six authorities but hadn't delivered services jointly. The opportunity to bid to the ESF fund, with support from the WLGA, enabled the project to employ a project manager and develop joint working capacity across the six councils. These resources were used to support the dual aims of improving both the efficiency of legal services and the quality of legal services across the region.

Western Bay Health and Social Care Programme

- 2.11 The Western Bay Health and Social Care Programme (WBHSCP) has brought together Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University (ABMU) Health Board with the local authorities of Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea and third sector partners to provide a strategic mechanism for co-ordinating a programme of change in a suite of health and social care projects to address issues that partners had identified as a common concern. The RCF grant has built on the earlier ESF-LSB funding project to deliver transformational projects in: Community (older people's) services; prevention and well-being; and contracting and procurement.

North Wales Economic Ambition Board

- 2.12 The North Wales Economic Ambition Board (EAB) includes the six local councils of North Wales, and representatives from the private sector, higher and further education and the third sector. The EAB does not deliver transformational projects but aims to facilitate everyone playing complementary roles in supporting the improvement of economic development across the region. The RCF funding has been used to institute a programme of work aimed at making better use of existing resources and delivering improvements to economic growth in four priority areas: Supply chain development; Infrastructure and connectivity; Skills and employment; and Marketing and communication.

Regional Shared School Improvement Service Hub Integration

- 2.13 The project involved four out of the six councils in the region pooling school improvement services at Hub levels within the regional education consortium (Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire acting as one Hub, and Ceredigion and Powys as another Hub). The Hubs aimed to introduce more consistency on approaches to school improvement. The RCF funding paid for the project manager, the other Heads of Hubs, commissioning leaders within schools to work on school improvement and capacity-building by officers supporting other authorities in driving improvements.

ICT Enabled Schools Transformation Programme

- 2.14 Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and Merthyr Tydfil (MTCBC) had a common aim to transform education through the use of ICT. The RCF funding enabled this multi-strand programme to pursue its two key objectives of: creating a single, centralised integrated Management Information System (MIS) which would enable the collation and analysis of data pupils' attendance and achievement data across the two authorities; and encouraging the widespread use of Microsoft IT Academy (MITA) across primary and secondary schools within RCT.

Meta-review

- 2.15 In addition to carrying out the five in-depth case studies (four RCF-funded and one ESF-WLGA funded) we undertook a meta-review of seven other ESF-WLGA regional projects, as outlined in paragraph 2.1. These are listed in Appendix 3. This approach enabled us to transfer learning from our ESF-LSB Project evaluation, to add to and compare with the thematic analysis of case study findings undertaken for this study.
- 2.16 The meta-review drew from the projects' closure reports, Welsh Government's ESF-LSB Project closure reports, and the descriptive case studies carried out by Data Unit Wales. Most of these were carried out some time before the end of the project, so there was little information about outcomes or impact and how processes contributed to these.
- 2.17 Consequently, we have used the more robust findings from our own in-depth case studies as the primary source of evidence on regional collaboration for this evaluation and the evidence from the meta-review for comparative purposes.

3 Thematic analysis of the findings on regional collaborative working

- 3.1 This chapter presents a thematic analysis of the key findings from the five in-depth case studies. As explained in the previous chapter, it also draws on evidence about regional collaboration from the ESF-LSB Project evaluation, where relevant, for comparative purposes.

Collaborative capacity and capability

- 3.2 Our evaluation of the ESF-LSB Project as well as other research has shown that collaborative capacity includes cultural and behavioural change as well as new structures, systems and processes to be put in place (Welsh Government, 2015a, Hayden, 2013). This is particularly true for ambitious transformational change projects that involve a number of different organisations.
- 3.3 While authorities in all four RCF case studies had collaborated to some extent prior to receiving RCF funding, developing the capacity and capability to move to effective regional working in complex policy areas was seen as a challenge. As a senior manager in one council explained:

'When we started we [the partners] had different priorities and policies, with some at crisis point; different personalities – some more principled, some more pragmatic; different pressures including [one organisation's] growing deficit; different starting points so it would take us different times to get to a standard model; and different performance criteria and regimes'.

- 3.4 Some case studies addressed this challenge by developing formal collaboration agreements at a relatively early stage of their project. For example, in Cwm Taf, agreements between Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and Merthyr Tydfil (MTCBC) for collaborative working on the ICT Enabled Schools Transformation Programme, included service level

agreements regarding RCT supporting MTCBC through hosting the centralised MIS system and undertaking the bulk of negotiations and arrangements with suppliers; joint procurement documents; and a Data Processing Agreement, which were signed off by both authorities' legal teams.

- 3.5 In Mid Wales, the Regional Shared School Improvement Service Hub Project involved four out of the six councils in the region, but Neath Port Talbot and Swansea have adopted the Hub model. This is a legal agreement between the six local authorities, and staff now work across the hubs and the region when required to do so.
- 3.6 Other projects relied less on legal agreements and more on developing joint commitments and plans to facilitate collaboration. The Western Bay Leadership Group produced a series of 'joint commitment documents' for learning disability, mental health and community services to determine priorities for each of these projects. The North Wales Economic Ambition Board found that having partners signed up to the Regional Skills and Employment Plan also helped to ensure that councils act on a regional basis.
- 3.7 Interviewees from across the case studies stressed that although these various types of joint agreements could help increase collaborative capacity by setting out common aims and expectations on partners, building the trust that is needed to make collaboration work in practice is rather more complicated.
- 3.8 The RCF resource was used to provide additional staff capacity to facilitate new inter-organisational ways of working such as the Hub approach in Mid Wales and regional contracting and procurement in Western Bay. This has contributed to raising school improvement and improving the cost-effectiveness of complex care placements. This provides a catalyst but collaborative capacity also has to be increased at all staff levels and embedded in organisations across the region. The projects in Mid Wales and Western Bay have invested in training – including mentoring, modelling and coaching - and sharing of good practice and networking to facilitate and motivate collaboration. As one member of staff from Mid Wales explained:

'The sharing and support happened in a positive way. We were made to feel that we can all learn from each other'.

- 3.9 Achieving this understanding about the positive benefits of collaboration has helped staff manage potential tensions between contributing to regional working and their 'day job', particularly at a time of budgetary pressures. As one manager from Western Bay explained:

'We're wearing two hats but don't need to take the regional one off to do the local [work]. Relationships [between staff from the four partner organisations] are good so we can have discussions and cope with difference'.

- 3.10 In North Wales, the EAB has tried to resolve possible tensions by making regional work more integrated and connected. One of the processes used is that a Senior Responsible Officer from one council leads each work-stream according to their own area of interest. This means that councils have to trust each other to deliver their individual work-streams and the region will benefit if they are delivered successfully. Although there are some concerns that the impacts of some work-streams will benefit parts of the region more than others, there is an appreciation that the economy as a whole benefits if connectivity and infrastructure is improved. As one officer noted:

'We are trusting and empowering Wrexham to deliver on Destination North Wales and they are trusting us'.

- 3.11 This approach to building collaborative capacity is similar to that used successfully by the same six North Wales authorities in the ESF-WLGA funded Legal Services Collaboration Project. This piloted regional virtual teams for Prosecution and Social Care and established Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to provide all staff with the opportunity to meet with colleagues across the region in the same areas of legal practice.

These continue to be led by senior officers from across the authorities who meet together as the 'Chairs of SIGs'. As one officer explained:

'Staff are working together at all levels. The virtual teams started building a system for collaboration – not just between managers but staff as well – the lowest level professionals are now working together. And this networking has had spin offs like joint training'.

- 3.12 A collaborative culture and capacity is required throughout partner organisations, including 'back office functions'. Although Western Bay's Regional Adoption Service with an integrated, co-located team is now 'working well together on delivery', it has had to overcome significant HR and IT issues, which use different systems and protocols in each of the three local authorities involved.
- 3.13 Initially there were concerns from councillors across some of the RCF case studies that they were 'being taken over' by regional collaboration with some pointing out that the projects were not democratically accountable. In time this view has changed, to a large extent due to councillors being part of regional governance structures such as the Partnership Forum in Western Bay or the North Wales EAB and/or becoming convinced of the opportunities to make improvements, such as schools performance in Mid Wales, by working together.
- 3.14 The ESF-WLGA projects have used similar methods to build collaborative capacity within and across authorities as the RCF case studies. The meta-review found that the main types of outcomes achieved by the projects were process outcomes and specifically an increase in collaborative capacity in the region.

Leadership

- 3.15 All five case studies and the meta-review have shown that leadership at senior levels is essential to give credibility, organisational focus and staff motivation to regional collaboration.

- 3.16 We found that far-reaching, complex collaboration projects require senior managerial leadership to drive the change strategy and prioritise the necessary financial and staff resources, especially when cuts in all areas of public services have to be made.
- 3.17 The chief executives of the City and County of Swansea and Carmarthenshire County Council were very much the ‘drivers’ and ‘strategists’ of the Western Bay and Mid Wales Regional Schools Improvement projects respectively. In both cases, these individuals saw the need for councils (and the Health Board in Western Bay) to work together more closely to improve outcomes for service users in a challenging financial context.

‘When the leaders [chief executives] came together with energy and focus to set up Western Bay it was the dawn of a new era’.

- 3.18 Both chief executives also had the influence to bring together the other chief executives and directors in the partnership to form a ‘tight’ senior leadership group, which is able to have ‘tough discussions’ and ‘the space to make difficult decisions’ to ensure the project is delivering real change.

‘Everybody turns up to every meeting [of the Mid Wales chief executives] and that continuity is important’.

- 3.19 The chief executives of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil not only supported their respective projects within the ICT Enabled Schools Transformation Programme, but were keen proponents of the regional project from the outset. As a result, the programme benefited from a ‘top-down’ approach ensuring that it was high on both councils’ agendas and decisions received quick sign-off, which had facilitated rapid progress.
- 3.20 The North Wales Legal Services Collaboration Project relied heavily on the strategic leadership of the Project Board which comprised the six Heads of Legal Services who have continued to meet ‘face-to

face' each month since the project ended in December 2014. This Board is supported by a Project Team responsible for operational leadership.

'The Board and Project Team have been essential. Before the project there was collaborative planning but we were not delivering jointly'.

- 3.21 While there is a lead chief executive for the North Wales EAB as well as an 'invaluable' Corporate Director from Gwynedd Council as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), the key strategic leadership role is played by the Chair of the EAB – the leader of Conwy County Borough Council. This individual is seen as providing 'strong and effective leadership' and is proactive in raising the profile of the Board and North Wales with politicians in the Welsh Government and UK Governments as well as in North-West England.
- 3.22 There were several examples from the RCF case studies where political leadership helped to facilitate collaboration. Leaders and cabinet members of each council together with the Chair of the Health Board and third sector representatives now comprise a 'Partnership Forum' in Western Bay's governance structure, which has helped elected members 'find out what's going on' and take an active regional role.
- 3.23 Similarly, the ESF-WLGA meta-review found that strategic, senior leadership – ideally from elected members and senior officers – was a key factor for success in generating collaborative capacity and in achieving outcomes. The role of the Leader of Powys County Council on the Partnership Board of the Mid Wales Comprehensive Collaborative Regional Waste Programme, and the commitment of all relevant Directors from all 10 local authorities involved in the Strategic Planning and Highways Service Delivery in South East Wales are both good examples of this. Conversely, the lack of this type of leadership in some projects made it more difficult to build collaboration or achieve outcomes.

- 3.24 To date, political scrutiny of the RCF projects has taken place within the constituent local authorities. So in Mid Wales, members question whether they are getting their fair share, want to be assured that money is being spent locally, that it provides value for money and impacts on outcomes. Similar scrutiny arrangements are in place in the three local authorities within Western Bay, and in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil.
- 3.25 None of the projects yet has regional-level scrutiny of the collaborative partnership and/or project to hold its performance to account. There was some support to co-ordinate scrutiny activities as it would help support improvement as ‘no-one is asking the basic question – what have you achieved’? Similarly, most members in Western Bay are keen to have a wider, regional scrutiny role but this is progressing slowly, possibly due to a ‘problem of moving at the pace of the slowest’.
- 3.26 The lack of joint scrutiny at the local level may reflect a confused picture at the national level. In education consortia for example, the view of Welsh Government is that senior consortia staff should not be required to spend a disproportionate amount of their time on reporting and scrutiny work (Welsh Government, 2015a), while Estyn recommend authorities developing formal working arrangements between scrutiny committees in their consortium, to scrutinise the work and impact of their regional consortium (Estyn, 2015). Our findings tally with recent research conducted in Wales which found that the scrutiny of partnership arrangements was patchy and in need of improvement (Downe and Ashworth, 2013).
- 3.27 Our analysis has shown that there are a number of different types of leadership at different levels needed for effective collaboration. These include leadership of the partnership and leadership of the partner organisations so they develop collaborative capacity and play a collaborative role.
- 3.28 These various types of leadership, which complement each other include:

- strategic leadership of the partnership – from senior managers and elected members (including of scrutiny);
- strategic leadership of partner organisations - from senior managers and cabinet members/portfolio holders;
- operational leadership of the partnership – from Project Director/Manager; and
- operational leadership of project themes/service areas – from Heads of Service and other senior/middle managers.

The Project Manager

- 3.29 The evidence from all five case studies and the ESF-WLGA meta-review strongly suggests that the role played by the project manager is vital. This role includes operational leadership (e.g. driving and promoting the change project, motivating and enabling staff to participate) and more transactional management. This is particularly the case where a large proportion of funds is devoted to project management e.g. more than a quarter of total costs in the North Wales EAB project were dedicated to project management and co-ordination.
- 3.30 In three of the RCF case studies and the ESF-WLGA case study, the project manager had specialist knowledge and significant experience which helped to facilitate trust from partners that activities would be delivered for mutual benefit. In Mid Wales, the project manager was a former head teacher, an Estyn inspector and the lead council officer for school improvement. In Cwm Taf, the project manager in one council had a background in ICT, whilst their equivalent in the other council works in the Business Change Team. This helped to ensure that the programme benefited from a range of different skills and expertise. Finally, the project manager of the North Wales Economic Ambition project was said to understand the region, have sufficient knowledge and experience and knows the individuals involved personally. This helped him to play the role of an ‘honest broker’

between the six councils in North Wales. Similar comments were made about the project manager of the North Wales Legal Services project who had been seconded from her previous position as a legal services manager in one of the authorities.

'The main enabler? A Project Manager to drive and facilitate collaboration. We are reliant on her for reports, chasing people, pulling things together for the six [authorities]'.

- 3.31 Project managers provided additional (senior) resource that was devoted to the project. This helped to ensure effective project management systems and aided communications across different parts of the project. The project managers were able to take a strategic view of performance across the project and act as a bridge across different components. In Western Bay, the RCF funded an overall programme manager and three project managers, all of whom are seen as essential to co-ordinate the interrelated work-streams of a large and complex programme.
- 3.32 This contrasts to the problem of adding the project to someone's 'day job'. In Cwm Taf, the project manager in RCT oversaw the ICT transformation programme in addition to her pre-existing role which created some challenges in terms of increased workload and led to the appointment of a project assistant.
- 3.33 The personal skills of the project manager are also important. In Mid Wales, interviewees praised the project manager's vision, character, depth of knowledge and experience of delivering 'at the chalk face'. He uses different leadership styles by being straight and direct in some instances, but can also influence colleagues to see why things are being done in certain ways.
- 3.34 It is important for project managers to have clear lines of responsibility and governance arrangements. For instance, the project manager in Mid Wales has a plan to work to (covering the three years of the post), but has the freedom to operate in delivering this plan. He

reports directly to a chief executive and is held to account by the joint committee of leaders and chief executives.

- 3.35 We can conclude by suggesting that the role played by the project manager is an important factor in determining the success of a project. The RCF funding has provided additional expertise, capacity and focus on performance management in making projects deliver. In the North Wales EAB:

'The project manager makes all the difference'.

- 3.36 This project clearly shows that the work-streams that have made the greatest progress have had dedicated staff resource. This has enabled a number of activities including bringing all the key players together to design a funding bid rather than involving them towards the end of the process. It has also helped to build ownership of the project so they have an interest in delivering outcomes.
- 3.37 An impact of the RCF resource is that it enabled councils to trial the project manager positions to see how they worked. In Mid Wales, the project manager position was the first joint appointment of its kind and will be co-funded by councils once the fund has ended. In the North Wales EAB, they are seeking additional funds to continue the project manager posts.
- 3.38 The meta-review found that project managers had gained transferable skills and experience of managing collaborative working to some extent in all ESF-WLGA projects. These skills included: building and maintaining relationships at all levels; negotiating, influencing and motivating (to 'make things happen' without line management authority); project management (of the project overall and the individual work streams). This outcome was of particular interest to the WLGA who invested in the regional ESF-funded projects partly to develop a set of skills for local authority project managers working on collaboration.

Organisational and service change

- 3.39 All five case studies showed how collaboration had driven – and been enabled by – a variety of types of organisational and service change. These range from changes to practice within a specific service and/or organisation, to new mechanisms for collaboration and co-ordination between and across authorities, and the establishment of integrated regional services.
- 3.40 These types of changes can be seen as intermediate or process outcomes in their own right. They act as a step towards improving outcomes for citizens and represent improvements in the infrastructure and collaborative capacity (through structures, processes and behaviours) that are necessary to sustain change through collaboration.
- 3.41 The implementation of the MIS system in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil has resulted in changes in practice in schools and increased efficiencies in both authorities. These have benefited from the implementation of the jointly procured software that hosts the MIS system which, for example, has enabled 80% of school admissions to be made online rather than by paper.
- 3.42 These changes have taken place in parallel; there has been little regional activity across the two authorities beyond RCT procuring the software on behalf of both authorities (albeit with separate licence agreements) and some initial agreements on how to implement the two projects.
- 3.43 In contrast, the Mid Wales Regional Shared School Improvement Service project has used RCF to provide a team of officers working across authorities on a needs-based approach, where resource is provided according to the grading of schools. As staff are deployed across the Hub rather than being based in one authority, this provides the Hub leads with ‘the ability to chop and change staff’ according to specialism and draw upon a wider team of people.

'We're not just working for one authority anymore but across the whole region'.

- 3.44 The regional approach has led to a clearer focus upon standards and the use of data. The RCF resource has enabled Carmarthenshire to provide software for Pembrokeshire that produces a report for schools to help them track different groups of children. Similarly, Ceredigion have developed tracking software that is used across four authorities and was first trialled in Powys. The Hub arrangement means that there is a critical mass of teachers for training courses and has helped to facilitate additional opportunities to network, which means that good practice from a wider pool of knowledge can be passed on.
- 3.45 Some service and organisational change is harder to quantify but there were a number of examples of changes in collaborative culture. For example, there are now much closer working relationships between senior officers in the Mid Wales local authorities, which have provided the foundations for joint funding bids and a few joint appointments across Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire.
- 3.46 The North Wales EAB represents a new way of working in the region which recognises that many elements of economic development such as skills and employment, infrastructure, tourism etc. make sense at the regional, rather than the local level, although some of these issues are more important for some councils than for others. The change that has taken place in North Wales is about local authorities working together on issues of joint interest rather than employing a common resource to work across the region as in Mid Wales. This has encouraged the councils to collaborate rather than compete.
- 3.47 The disadvantage of this approach is that it is heavily dependent on the skills and capacity of the staff that are leading a particular work-stream, meaning that some work-streams move faster than others. However, service and organisational change that has been achieved include joint commissioning of external research into the modernisation of the rail network; a Regional Skills and Employment Plan; four out of six councils migrating into a new CRM system which

manages inward investment inquiries; and various joint communication initiatives through different types of media.

- 3.48 There is ongoing discussion about the introduction of a new delivery model which would encompass more staff being based regionally with a centrally funded programme office. Although there were some differences around the stage at which it felt right to move beyond co-ordination to this model of joint working, all councils believe that this model of working is now essential and support it being led by Gwynedd Council (which also lead the project).
- 3.49 The Western Bay programme has resulted in a considerable number of changes to service delivery and organisational structures at a regional level and in each of the four partner organisations. The Community Services programme has adopted the 'optimal service model' for intermediate care which has enabled the three local authority services, which were at different starting points, to move towards a standard approach based around Common Access Points which provide a multi-disciplinary triage, staffed by health and social care staff as well as third sector brokers. This stage establishes the priority or 'presenting need', which is addressed through the Community Resource Teams (one in each local authority), which can provide and/or call upon reablement and rapid response services as well as intermediate care and more preventative support.
- 3.50 This change in how services are delivered to older people has required a considerable amount of organisational change affecting structures, processes and staff behaviours in the three local authorities, Health Board and third sector organisations. Approximately 150 health and social care staff now work in each local authority's Community Resource Team under a single line manager, who is also able to access other relevant health services directly. The cultural changes took some 'selling' initially but after the benefits of being 'person-centred' were explained and staff actually started working alongside each other, the changes have been generally appreciated.

- 3.51 Other service and organisational changes driven by ESF-WLGA funded projects included the virtual regional teams in some areas of legal services in North Wales, mentioned above; joint procurement processes (e.g. a South East Wales Contractors Procurement and an online resource tool for South West Wales authorities' legal services to search for external solicitors); staff working together across authorities (e.g. Special Interest Groups (SIGs) in Legal Services in both North Wales and South West Wales); benchmarking of services (such as food waste collection across Mid Wales); and some moves towards joint appointments and staff teams (e.g. Engineering Design and Street Works Managers in Mid Wales).
- 3.52 The types and levels of service and organisational change in the case studies are tangible and have helped lead to positive outcomes. There are still debates about whether some of the newly established regional systems are working in parallel with local systems to some extent, which could be bureaucratic and costly and raises questions about sustaining the changes after RCF ends.

Outcomes

- 3.53 The ESF-WLGA case study and meta review which were carried out before the RCF case studies, found that the projects had mainly achieved process outcomes such as an increase in capacity in the region to enable collaboration to become 'business as usual' rather than service outcomes. In part, this is related to the focus of most of the ESF-WLGA projects being on infrastructure or 'back office' functions rather than front line services delivered directly to citizens.
- 3.54 Although there was little evidence of outcomes for citizens, the North Wales Legal Services project and three of the projects in the meta review had quantified efficiency gains arising from shared staff and resources (in Legal Services, Engineering and Street services) and regional procurement (in Waste Disposal, Legal Services, IT and Health and Social Care). Only Western Bay had produced clear evidence of improved service quality for users resulting from ESF-

WLGA funding which was further developed through RCF and other external funding streams.

- 3.55 Before examining outcomes from our four RCF case studies, it is important to note that a number of the projects relied upon other funding sources in addition to RCF. Western Bay, for example, also received ESF-WLGA funding prior to RCF and funding from three sources beyond RCF. This makes it more difficult to assess the impact of one funding stream, such as RCF, on outcomes.
- 3.56 There is some diversity between projects on outcomes. In North Wales, economic development was described as being a 'slow burn activity' and interviewees argued it is too early to assess whether the EAB has led to outcomes. The project has been more about putting foundations in place for transformational change, and it is therefore difficult to produce outcomes in the short-term. This echoes findings from the ESF-LSB evaluation of some local and regional collaborative projects' progress towards outcomes within the funded timescale.
- 3.57 In Cwm Taf, RCT is the second area in Europe to have implemented the IT Academy at an authority level (rather than on a school-by-school basis) and a large majority of schools are involved. Pupils have obtained qualifications through the Academy relating to Microsoft Office 365 and in coding or App design. One pupil gained an apprenticeship in the NHS as a direct result of achieving a MOS qualification through the Academy.
- 3.58 The two education projects shared a common outcome relating to Estyn. In Mid Wales, the project aimed to take Pembrokeshire and Powys out of Estyn's follow-up categories and this has been achieved with Estyn highlighting the impact of collaborative working. Similarly, in Cwm Taf, a key outcome of the transformation programme is that Merthyr Tydfil has been able to satisfy the demands of the Estyn inspection and have successfully established a robust MI system for tracking and monitoring pupils' attendance.
- 3.59 In Western Bay, it is clear that collaboration is starting to result in tangible outcomes for service users. In the community services programme (older people's services), the project has led to reductions

in the number of care home placements, more re-ablement interventions, and an increase in rapid response interventions. Qualitative evidence has also been collected to complement the quantitative data on outcomes. Most of the projects within Western Bay are developing short case studies of outcomes from service users' perspectives and these are available on the Western Bay website, in quarterly newsletters and as YouTube videos available through Western Bay TV. A post dedicated to communications greatly assists in 'getting the message out'.

- 3.60 It is difficult to isolate outcomes which can be directly related to the projects. In Cwm Taf, levels of attainment in both RCT and MTCBC have improved, there has been a notable improvement in pupils' attendance at both primary and secondary levels, and there has been a reduction in the proportion of young people aged 16-24 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). In Mid Wales, generally, there has been a consistent improvement in key indicators. Yet, it is difficult to attribute these improvements to the RCF as there are many other contributory factors. While these two projects can demonstrate a number of outputs, it is much harder to provide evidence on ultimate outcomes.
- 3.61 Some projects have experienced difficulties in defining outcome measures at the start of the project. In Mid Wales, the project set out to add resilience, deliver better consistency and challenge, offer more rapid access to support, avoid duplication and better align the service across the local authorities involved. It was not clear what measures were used to evaluate success on these factors.
- 3.62 In North Wales, there was no problem in outlining clear outcome measures. Success 'will be measured in terms of tangible benefits – jobs, investment and profile both domestically and internationally'. Key measures of success included jobs created and safeguarded; inward investment projects secured; private sector investment secured; and procurement/supply chain development (value of contract awarded). Unfortunately:

'These outcome measures (in the proposal) are never referred to at the Board'.

- 3.63 As mentioned above, it takes a long time to deliver such outcomes and no indicators to measure intermediate outcomes were designed into this project. However, interviewees recognised that there needed to be more work done to develop suitable indicators (which lie under the ultimate outcome of Gross Value Added) that can be included in the business case for further funding. Designing intermediate outcomes, and appropriate ways of measuring and monitoring them, would likely result in more discussion and scrutiny of project performance over time and shift the emphasis away from the assessment of final outcomes.
- 3.64 These findings also echo those of the ESF-LSB evaluation, which found that the majority of delivery projects had not set appropriate outcome indicators at the outset of the project. This, combined with the absence of any theoretical framework for their local evaluations, affected their ability to review progress towards outcomes and manage and/or develop their project.
- 3.65 An important policy consideration for the Welsh Government is whether the RCF projects appeared to have learned the lessons from the ESF-LSB project and set more realistic, achievable outcomes. Unfortunately, the time between the two projects made this difficult, except in the case of Western Bay, which received both sources of grant finance and used learning from the ESF-funded first phase to scope and performance manage the second phase funded through RCF.
- 3.66 Surveys of users/stakeholders have been used in projects to gather perceptions on performance. GPs in Western Bay provided a positive response on how they refer people where the assessment is on the basis of need, and surveys of head teachers in Mid Wales are reported to be similarly positive on the support provided on school improvement.

- 3.67 In addition to the problem of defining measures, there is also the issue of not being able to measure some outcomes. In Cwm Taf, the ultimate objective of the MITA project was to instil effective pedagogy across local schools within the borough and to consequently improve the students' learning experience (rather than focusing on the numbers of qualifications). Closer collaboration with neighbouring schools has resulted in students presenting to each other (both via the Hub and in person) and there is common feeling that their confidence has increased as a result of this interaction. Measuring more effective pedagogy and increased confidence, however, although they may be influential on educational outcomes, is not a straightforward task.
- 3.68 In all local authorities and across both Hubs in Mid Wales, there are said to be more challenging conversations with schools, which leads to effective brokering of support (from both the Hub and from peer schools). Schools are also challenged more where poor performance has occurred. The Directors of Education in all local authorities challenged head teachers in targeted schools about why recent results were disappointing and discuss what needs to be done differently.
- 3.69 Finally, there is a range of evidence on projects producing cost efficiencies. In both North Wales and Mid Wales, no quantifiable efficiencies have been produced. In Cwm Taf, various efficiency savings have been made e.g. the transfer of student data to an electronic system reducing the costs associated with compiling and processing a paper return. It is likely that long-term cost-efficiencies will also be generated by the standardisation of schools' MIS software, but the figures have not been calculated yet.
- 3.70 It is in Western Bay where quantifiable efficiencies have been measured, the contracting and procurement project has produced £1.5m savings (by May 2015) mostly from a high cost case review originally rolled out in NPT. More than £0.5m annual cashable savings have been made from Right Sizing/Right Pricing and £350,000 annual

avoidance savings have been made through the Mental Health Brokering Service.

Role of the Welsh Government

- 3.71 The involvement of the Welsh Government in our RCF case studies varied widely. In two projects (Cwm Taf and Mid Wales), there was limited engagement beyond the formal requirement to provide quarterly reports on progress. While there was some interest from Welsh Government in Western Bay shown through visits and promotion of its approach, there was a frustration from several politicians and senior officers about a perceived lack of understanding within Welsh Government about regional collaboration and the difficulties of joining up between health and social care regionally when local government and health were in different Welsh Government departments with seemingly little contact/collaboration. The Welsh Government played a supportive role in the North Wales EAB. A government Minister attended a recent EAB awareness-raising event and Welsh Government officials attend meetings of the Board. All interviewees agreed that the relationship with Welsh Government across the different work-streams is significantly better than before.

‘There is nothing but support from the Welsh Government. A relationship is a two-way thing and trust is key’.

- 3.72 Interviewees in all case studies agreed that the reporting documents to Welsh Government could be improved. Projects had to report on expenditure that they were claiming for, indicators that had been achieved and general progress. There seemed to be no contact from Welsh Government with projects as a result of these reports, which suggests that the ‘right’ questions may not have been posed. This situation can be contrasted to Western Bay where regular reports are produced for the Programme Board that cover progress on the three

main projects and help to enable co-ordination between them within the overall Western Bay programme.

- 3.73 There were some similarities between the ESF-WGLA projects and some RCF projects in their frustration at the 'burdensome reporting requirements' to the Welsh Government combined with the feeling that the Welsh Government expected local authorities to collaborate while their own departments invariably worked in 'silos'.
- 3.74 In addition, the meta-review identified some key challenges to achieving outcomes through collaboration, which were connected to changes in Welsh Government policy on transport and local government reform during the period of ESF-WGLA funding.

Using the RCF and other programme resources for collaboration

- 3.75 The RCF resource paid for dedicated regional posts across our four case studies, which provided additional capacity to speed up existing areas of regional working and develop new initiatives. It also enabled projects to bring in specialist capacity according to need (e.g. agency staff to assist schools to make upgrades to their systems (Cwm Taf) or the commissioning of independent research in North Wales). The emphasis was clearly on funding projects where collaborations were already in place given the short time frame allowed to develop bids to Welsh Government.
- 3.76 The RCF resource has been used in different ways. In one project (Mid Wales), the funding was described as being like seed corn funding as the RCF funded a joint post that has now been mainstreamed. In another project (North Wales EAB), RCF was vital because councils would have struggled to prioritise resource going to economic development. The money can act as a useful incentive to get people around a table.

'You can't live on good will alone. It has oiled the cogs'.

- 3.77 In the majority of our case studies, RCF was one of a number of different funding streams aimed at delivering service improvement. In Western Bay for example, the project also received funding from the European Social Fund, the Welsh Local Government Association, (both through the ESF-LSB Project), the Intermediate Care Fund, and the Delivering Transformation Grant. RCF enabled Western Bay to build on the ESF-WLGA funding and then apply for other external funding, so there was continuity and a critical mass of funding to drive transformational change over a period of time.
- 3.78 The funding has enabled projects to innovate and trial new ways of doing things. This includes the introduction of the Microsoft IT Academy across schools in RCT and the creation of a number of promotional films released on social media in the Destination North Wales work-stream. In Western Bay, the RCF was used to introduce a more joined-up approach to the review of the quality and costs of complex care packages provided to individuals and then for regional procurement of more cost-effective care packages.
- 3.79 The way the RCF has been implemented has caused significant difficulties for projects. The cuts in funding in the third year in response to budgetary pressures meant that councils had to re-profile their finances and reduce the number of activities.

'We now have to abandon some excellent collaboration and make staff redundant'.

- 3.80 Some councils have found that the short-term nature of the funding arrangements means that posts to work on projects are not attractive to staff. It is possible that some councils are better than others at using external funding within mainstream provision/for secondments linked to core roles.
- 3.81 The experience of the ESF-WLGA funded projects echoes that of the RCF projects in relation to the short-term nature of funding. The North Wales Legal Services project was affected quite significantly by the perceived lack of flexibility of ESF funding and the inability to extend

the timescale needed to achieve some outcomes to compensate for an earlier 'underspend' due to the project manager's sickness absence and other unavoidable delays.

- 3.82 Other ESF-WGLA projects felt that changes in policy priorities (e.g. in regional transport) meant that it was very difficult to use ESF-WLGA resources to pilot new approaches which could, if successful, attract other external funds. This contrasts with projects such as Western Bay where other Welsh Government funding streams have been available for the policy priority of integrating health and social care.

Learning

- 3.83 Learning has taken place in three main ways within the case study areas: within the project and regional partnership; drawing on other regions' or partnerships' practice in similar policy areas and sharing learning with other regional projects, including those funded through RCF and the Welsh Government.
- 3.84 The case studies all demonstrated that learning had been shared within the project and wider partnership. This learning took different forms and seems to have been used to varying extents to develop the projects. Western Bay has a relatively formal approach to learning embedded in its programme management. It undertook an internal 'governance review of the programme, reports regularly to a 'Leadership Group' and 'Partnership Forum' to reflect on learning and make proposals for development, used RCF to 'test and learn from' pilot schemes, and has set up multi-agency and service user action learning sets to continue to improve mental health services.
- 3.85 The Mid Wales Regional Shared School Improvement Service project set up regional meetings between senior local authority officers to share good practice with 'challenge advisors' and inform departmental planning. The schools' IT transformation project seemed to rely more on 'learning by doing' within the core project team which led to, for example, a recognition that the project was being rolled out too quickly for some schools to engage fully. Following a review of

- lessons learned, RCT scaled back the project and a renewed focus was placed on the original outcome in a smaller cohort of schools.
- 3.86 These three projects also held regional learning events to highlight effective ways of working. These were seen as important to enable partners to learn from good practice and understand how it could improve outcomes. In Western Bay, this was felt to be helpful in motivating staff to invest time in 'doing things differently' rather than feeling regional collaboration was competing with 'the day job'.
- 3.87 In relation to sharing learning with other regional projects and partnerships, Rhondda Cynon Taf instigated some discussion with North Wales authorities who, two years ago, established a similar project that involved hosting a MIS system for schools. The authorities involved held discussions at a 'Shared Learning Day' on the best approach to the provisional cleansing of data and are now exploring the effect of MIS pupil attendance and attainment in the two regions.
- 3.88 The ESF-WLGA case study and meta-review found that North Wales authorities had learnt through collaborating on different service areas, which has helped to reinforce collaboration as a 'way of working' and has supported the implementation of, for example, a common CMS to support regional legal services. The North Wales ICT and Legal Services project were both funded through ESF-WLGA resources (as was the South West Wales ICT and Legal Service Project) so the WLGA was able to bring the managers of all three projects together, which was helpful in sharing learning and embedding collaboration.
- 3.89 These North Wales projects also appreciated the support they received from the Welsh Government officer from the ESF-LSB team in both delivering their own projects and in facilitating learning between projects, local authorities and LSBs through a regional learning network.
- 3.90 Although one of the aims of the North Wales EAB project was to capture and communicate lessons with other regional collaborative initiatives, lessons from the project have not been shared to date as they have concentrated on their own ways of working. It was

recognised that there needed to be better communications with ‘the outside world’.

- 3.91 A lack of wider communications was also identified in the Western Bay governance review. This led to investment in a new communications strategy with the appointment of a RCF-funded, full-time Communications and Engagement Officer, who has set up a website, a quarterly newsletter for all staff and partners, ad-hoc press releases and a television channel called Western Bay TV. The Welsh Government has used the learning about Western Bay’s approach to illustrate the potential of the Social Services and Well-being Act to encourage and improve regional collaboration in health and social care.
- 3.92 Learning from other regions’ practice was used by three of the case studies to inform new approaches and/or work-streams within the RCF projects. Western Bay’s innovative approaches to improving the accessibility of self-help information and increasing user-engagement in mental health services drew on the experience of two NHS Trusts in England. The programme’s move to regional commissioning and procurement of complex social care packages benefited from the learning generated from similar approaches in England.
- 3.93 In a very different policy area, the North Wales EAB has learnt from Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in north-west England and is monitoring developments with the Growth Bids and Devolution deals in England, with some interesting delivery models and approaches developing. A new work-stream will focus on connecting North Wales to the Northern Powerhouse to better capitalise on the cross-border economy.
- 3.94 In Mid Wales, members of the core team made contact with other RCF projects e.g. on joint legal services, to learn what has worked well (in particular the structures they were setting up) and its applicability to their project. Teachers from schools in Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire have made links with a secondary school in Gloucestershire which has shown impressive results from its improvement process. Schools in Powys are working

collaboratively with similar schools in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, putting into practice the view of one head teacher that:

‘Heads should not be parochial but ‘get out and learn’’

- 3.95 While there has been some learning from other parts of Wales, it is noticeable how experience from England has contributed, possibly because of the opportunity to learn from some of the recent regional partnership initiatives that have been introduced in England, focused on economic development and integrating health and social care.

Sustainability

- 3.96 An important question for our evaluation was whether projects were likely to be sustained after the external programme funding stops. We were also interested if further outcomes would be achieved after this period through the embedding or mainstreaming of processes.
- 3.97 The ESF-WLGA North Wales Legal Services Project Board felt that the collaboration that has taken place has enabled legal services across the region to become more flexible and resilient – now and in the future. It is likely that the project can be sustained as ‘core business’ but this will depend on a continuing commitment to, and investment in, collaboration from all six authorities at a time of financial constraints.

‘The need is growing to show efficiency savings but [there is] no facility to recharge or ring fence budgets for regional services. Cuts in legal services staff mean there is less flexibility and less capacity to pool resources, which impacts on virtual teams, although they become even more important’.

- 3.98 There was evidence that collaboration is starting to become ‘business as usual’ in some of the ESF-WLGA projects covered by the meta-review, but plans for sustaining collaboration beyond the funded period depended on: the project’s progress by the end of the funding

and whether this was likely to continue; opportunities for and attitudes to collaboration in the context of local government reform; and whether resources were available through local authority contributions and/or external funding to drive and co-ordinate collaboration, particularly through a dedicated project manager.

- 3.99 The evidence from our RCF case studies is more positive. For example, the project manager post in Mid Wales will continue and be co-funded by two councils, so the RCF has been used as seed corn funding. In Western Bay, the Community Services project has just about reached the stage of being embedded as 'business as usual' by the three local authorities and the Health Board and funding for the Contracting and Procurement project has been extended for a further year, which will allow time for new processes to be embedded and for it to become self-funding.
- 3.100 There is some uncertainty about the future of the other two projects we used as RCF case studies. While in North Wales, the work of the EAB will continue with relatively small annual contributions from councils of around £30,000 each, further support from the Welsh Government is needed to deliver outputs at the same pace. In Cwm Taf, it is too early to know whether schools will continue to use (and pay for) the IT Academy once the contract has ended.
- 3.101 All projects will leave a legacy as processes or new ways of working have been embedded. In Mid Wales, a range of partnerships set up as a result of RCF will continue within the work of the consortia. Also in education, the Cwm Taf case study revealed that the training of staff and sharing of learning is now part of the curricula in some schools. A number of projects within Western Bay are starting to be embedded as a new way of working which are more collaborated, integrated and user-centred. The Regional Adoption Service is fully integrated and co-located and Community Resource Teams are best placed to become 'business as usual'.
- 3.102 There are a number of other factors that may influence the sustainability of projects. First, all projects are vulnerable to public sector budget cuts which will constrain the coverage and quality of

services that can be provided. Second, at the time of our research, the proposed local government reorganisation caused concerns about the potential impact on the configuration of councils involved in the projects. All six councils in North Wales are currently involved as a region, but the proposals of two or three councils in the region would have had a significant impact. The proposal for Bridgend to join RCT and Merthyr Tydfil while Western Bay includes Neath Port Talbot and Swansea, would also have disrupted existing collaborations. Third, some of the collaboration (e.g. in Mid Wales) is taking place on an informal basis and therefore runs the risk of falling down if relationships or trust is punctured.

- 3.103 Finally, projects may leave a legacy if learning from their practice is shared widely and implemented in other areas. In Cwm Taf, there is potential to extend the reach of the Microsoft IT Academy beyond schools to libraries and/or Jobcentre Plus. Another council (Bridgend) may also be interested in purchasing the software driving further shared learning, collaboration and efficiencies. There are opportunities for the 'good practice' in projects to be shared with others – whether with city regions on how the North Wales EAB is working or on school improvement across education consortia.
- 3.104 Again, this echoes findings about learning from the ESF-LSB evaluation and wider evidence on organisational learning. One of the key challenges is not only to find and use opportunities to disseminate and communicate 'good practice' on regional collaboration, but to ensure that it effects changes in behaviour and results in good practice being transferred.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

- 4.1 The conclusions that we present in this chapter draw on the thematic analysis of findings from the case studies and meta-review presented in Chapter 3 to address the key questions for this evaluation as summarised in Chapter 2. These drew on the original brief, the findings from initial interviews with RCF project managers and discussions with Welsh Government.

How to make regional collaboration work more effectively

- 4.2 One of the main aims of our evaluation was ‘to examine the processes and implementation of the funding mechanisms, to identify factors that contribute to the achievement of their outcomes’. We were tasked with providing ‘further insight into the factors that make collaborative projects work, particularly in a regional context, and how challenges can be overcome’.
- 4.3 Our thematic analysis in Chapter 3 has shown that there are a number of common factors or ‘enablers’ which help to facilitate effective collaboration in a range of contexts. We summarise below our main findings and recommendations for change.

Senior, strategic leadership

- 4.4 In each of our case studies, the leadership role played by senior managers, in particular, chief executives, was vital in giving focus and credibility to regional collaboration. These individuals spanning local authorities and across the public sector gave the projects a profile across the region as well as within each partner organisation. This often meant that the initiative was highlighted as a priority so staff resources were made available, which in turn meant that progress was quick and timescales were adhered to.

- 4.5 This top-down style of leadership was transformational in the way that the chief executives led by example, initiated innovative ways of working by providing a vision and communicated this to the wider workforce. Our research on the ESF-LSB Project found varied levels of managerial leadership from the LSBs and relatively little in the way of political leadership (Welsh Government, 2016), so our findings here – where councils rather than LSBs are directly leading the projects - are more positive. This may be because the lead agencies for regional collaboration are generally local authorities rather than LSBs.
- 4.6 Our evidence also reveals the importance of using expertise from a wider area to deliver across the region and of leadership being distributed within a project. This can take the form of having senior responsible officers managing individual work-streams within a project on behalf of a group of councils or using joint appointments spanning authorities. Where leadership is distributed in this way, relationships were based on good foundations of trust being built up over time between partners.
- 4.7 Political leadership is also an important factor for effective collaboration and we found that political support for a project needs to be lined up from the outset. While there are different political colours (and thereby priorities) within the case study regions, political relationships in relation to collaboration seem to have matured over time. This has helped to facilitate collaboration and can influence the way officers behave when working across local authority boundaries.
- 4.8 Political leadership is also extremely useful in bringing a diverse group of organisations to work together and provide democratically elected accountability for the partnership. This is essential in a regional context, if different local authorities (as well as other partners) are going to work together, especially if there has been some rivalry historically. Senior political involvement in regional working can send out the message that collaboration can help to realise individual organisations' priorities – rather than be in competition with them.

Recommendations

4.9 We recognise that a wide range of variables such as individuals' behaviour, organisational culture, the political climate and the strength of accountability, will all be strong influences that vary from place to place and over time. But there are certain practical steps, which both the organisations delivering collaborative projects and the Welsh Government, could take to strengthen senior strategic leadership of collaborative projects.

- The Welsh Government developing more robust application and funding award processes, which identify individuals with senior-level responsibility and accountability for projects. (This may require deeper exploration and discussion of what is required to lead a project successfully and what partners can do to ensure effective leadership.)
- Greater emphasis and more consideration could be given to how the model of leadership underpinning a project will work and how it might affect its prospects. Our evidence suggests that leadership can lead to more effective collaboration when distributed across partner organisations and a region and early consideration has been given to how to secure invaluable political support.

Dedicated project manager role

4.10 Sustaining positive working relationships across councils and a range of other stakeholders is not an easy task. In a regional context, this can be exacerbated by the need for co-ordination across a large geographical area without an existing partnership vehicle (e.g. an LSB, which seems to be irrelevant to regional collaboration) to play this role. We have found that the senior strategic leadership discussed above needs to be backed up by competent operational leadership and co-ordination through a project manager. This role,

which includes 'oiling the cogs' internally and 'getting people on board' externally, is vital for the success of collaborative projects.

- 4.11 When attempting to introduce cultural change and new ways of working, it is important to get mind-sets right at all levels of the organisation and win people over. In addition to setting up the 'nuts and bolts' of a project and performance management processes, the project manager, working alongside senior officers, needs to invest time in setting out the 'rules of engagement'. They should also ensure there is understanding and agreement on the project being about the greater good of the region rather than being seen as silo-ed working and competing with neighbouring authorities.
- 4.12 Having a dedicated project manager position means that an individual has a clear role and responsibility for the project and managing relationships within and across partner organisations. It is important that project managers are an additional senior resource with sufficient experience and knowledge to get things done, rather than the role being added to someone's day job.
- 4.13 Our findings about the importance of a dedicated project manager role echo those in the ESF-LSB evaluation (Welsh Government 2016). Given the amount of resource provided by the RCF (around £8m across our four RCF case studies) and the potential significant impact on service improvement, there is arguably an even clearer 'business case' to be made to have sufficient capacity at project manager level to support effective collaboration.
- 4.14 Having made this investment, both the Welsh Government and the WLGA are interested in learning about 'What are the key skills and behaviours that are required for effective project management of regional collaboration and how can these be transferred and/or replicated to build collaborative capacity in local government'?
- 4.15 Our research has identified the following skills and behaviours that are exhibited by effective project managers:
- an in-depth understanding of the region and service area;

- an ability to play the role of an ‘honest broker’ between local authorities – this is probably more important to regional than local collaboration with the added challenge of competitiveness between councils;
- interpersonal skills in building and maintaining relationships at all levels;
- skills in negotiating, influencing and motivating (to ‘make things happen’ without line management authority);
- project management skills for setting up and using systems for reporting, chasing and monitoring progress;
- an ability to take a strategic view of performance across the project and act as a bridge across different components and lead organisations/officers (particularly in large, complex projects); and
- understanding the importance of communications and having the skills to develop and oversee arrangements for these for a variety of audiences.

4.16 Invariably projects had found that when the funding stops (or was due to stop), the project manager often leaves for another post, particularly if they were appointed on a short-term contract.

Secondments can help prevent this if the post-holder knows that they have a substantive job to return to, but this relative level of security is also being affected by the cuts being made in middle to senior management staffing levels in most authorities.

4.17 As the need for collaboration is likely to continue regardless of changes to the public sector landscape, it is important that the skills needed to drive and support effective collaboration are appreciated. There may be a role for WLGA and HR departments in authorities as well as Welsh Government in encouraging this.

Recommendations

- As the evidence suggests the skills set of collaborative project managers is a specific one, there would be merit in building on the project manager training programme developed for the ESF-WLGA funded regional collaboration projects and offering this more widely across the public sector.
- Alongside this, we recommend that a set of collaborative project management competencies (knowledge, skills and behaviours) is developed. These should be linked to recruitment, remuneration and progression of local authority staff, which may improve the prospects for retaining these essential skills within the public sector.
- Future grant funding, and project-based working generally, should be structured in a way that allows for recruitment of project managers to take place before substantive work begins, rather than during the early stages when valuable time can be lost.
- Project manager posts should be positioned at a sufficiently senior level to ensure organisations are able to attract the combination of skills and experience necessary to be effective in regional working.

Effective governance arrangements

- 4.18 Effective collaboration depends upon getting the ‘right’ people (both managerial and political) around the table, and nurturing the inter-personal relationships between these individuals. There is a risk to projects when relationships between individuals are punctured by irreconcilable differences or if personnel move on or retire. The case studies showed the value of having continuity of senior officers in leadership roles, but there is a potential danger around sustainability if the success of projects relies heavily on a small number of specific individuals.

- 4.19 Clear governance structures and processes need to be introduced at an early stage of the project and embedded so that collaboration is not dependent upon specific individuals. These arrangements should include roles and remits for decision making and delivery with reporting lines and mechanisms for project management. The formality of the governance arrangements should reflect the context of each collaboration and need be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose as the project develops, and inclusive of all relevant partners including those from the third and private sectors.
- 4.20 Given the collaborative nature of the projects, it has been surprising that there has been a lack of joint scrutiny between authorities. This may reflect the fact that it is assumed to be easier to scrutinise regional performance locally and/or be a symptom of each partner authority wanting to ensure that it is 'getting its fair share'. It could also be the problem of moving at the pace of the slowest given differing views from the councils involved. Whatever the reason for joint scrutiny not being undertaken, our evidence would suggest that joint scrutiny arrangements would enhance the effectiveness of regional collaboration by involving elected members more fully in the projects and making accountability a stronger and more transparent part of the project's governance.

Recommendations

- The Welsh Government should place greater emphasis on governance arrangements in funding applications and project monitoring, focusing on how projects will be reviewed and be held accountable.
- Public service organisations need to give greater consideration to the political governance of any collaborative working arrangement, including whether joint scrutiny arrangements are necessary and how these will work.
- Formal project management and review and reflective learning need to be built into the governance of any collaborative change

project, both to improve the project itself and replicate successful approaches more widely.

Evidence of project success and outcomes achieved

- 4.21 The second key objective for the evaluation was to ‘assess the outcomes of the regional collaboration projects funded through the ESF-LSB and RCF’, and in particular, what outcomes have been achieved, both for service users and citizens and through financial efficiencies from collaborative working.
- 4.22 We found that the use of RCF and/or ESF-WLGA funding has increased collaborative capacity and led to service and organisational change. These outputs (or process outcomes) include new mechanisms for collaboration between and across authorities, and improvements in collaborative culture. These outputs have contributed to public service outcomes in most case studies and the meta-review. We provide examples of these in Chapter 3.
- 4.23 Our qualitative research with the case studies did identify some evidence of outcomes, although the extent of these varied between projects. Although it is difficult to formally attribute all these outcomes to the project, our evaluation framework helps us to understand the project’s contribution to these through identifying the ‘determinants of project outcomes’ (see next section).
- 4.24 Before discussing these, it is worth outlining the reasons it is difficult to attribute outcomes directly and/or solely to the project. First, it is hard to disentangle the contribution made by one source of funding (such as RCF) when many other funding streams may also be directed to the policy ‘problem’. There are also other inputs, beyond funding, that are likely to have had an impact on both project and wider outcomes. These will include changes in partners’ priorities and a refocusing of resources, possibly because of reduction in staffing levels. A third problem is that it is difficult to measure quantitatively some of the outcomes. Finally, many of the potential improved service

outcomes and efficiencies are likely to be revealed long after the life of the funded project has ended.

- 4.25 We found that some projects did not set realistic, achievable outcome measures which means that there is a lack of evidence to measure the 'success' of the project. This is an issue that we discovered in evaluating other collaborative projects (Welsh Government 2015a, 2016). In addition, while identifiable efficiencies and financial savings were reported in some projects, these were not always fully quantified.
- 4.26 Some of the case studies found it difficult to assess outcomes for service users. We recognise this concern, especially if there are insufficient evaluation skills and capacity available to the project. However, we would argue that it is not an acceptable reason for ignoring these outcomes and organisations need to design ways in which evidence can be gathered from service users to assess whether collaborations have made a difference. The Welsh Government needs to press projects at the application stage to design both outcomes and outcome measures that are realistic.

Determinants of project outcomes

- 4.27 A key question for the evaluation was the extent to which the similarities and differences between different projects' outcomes are determined by the nature of their funding, the collaborative processes and project management that have been put in place, and the service areas and geographical contexts the projects are operating in.
- 4.28 This is clearly important to understand for the potential replicability of projects in different contexts and while the five case studies provide a relatively small sample from which to draw conclusions on causation (or at least why particular aspects of some projects contributed more to outcomes than others), they do illuminate some of the likely reasons for the differences in progress and outcomes.

Governance, leadership and project management

- 4.29 These three factors - governance, leadership and project management – have already been discussed as important enabling factors in building collaborative capacity. Our findings show that they are also determinants of project outcomes as they need to continue to function effectively to support and sustain collaborative capacity and activities in order to achieve the desired outcomes.
- 4.30 Beyond these 'internal determinants', there are 'external determinants' which can affect the likelihood of a project achieving its outcomes. We consider these below.

Context and project rationale

- 4.31 Across all five of our case studies, there was agreement that 'something needed to be done' in these service areas and authorities were already working on improvements before applying for external funding. In two case studies, this consensus resulted from external pressures from an inspectorate (Estyn). In two other cases, all the partners agreed that serious issues needed to be addressed in the light of public sector funding cuts and/or increased service demand, and that everyone would gain by working together. In the final case, the Welsh Government's move towards a more preventative, holistic health and social care policy agenda acted as an important enabler for regional collaboration to deliver this national priority.
- 4.32 Several of the ESF-WLGA funded projects had also begun before funding became available because of cost pressures driving the need to make efficiencies through shared systems and/or staff resources.

Nature of funding

- 4.33 In all five of our case studies, councils were already working together on the project areas, so the resource acted as a catalyst for change within these. The way in which the funds were launched did not

incentivise new collaborative working. The lack of time to make a bid for a new project meant that funding was used to progress existing projects rather than deliver a new way of working per se. The 'problem' came first and the resource was generally used to enable the partners to increase their level of activity and/or collaborative capacity (e.g. through appointing a dedicated project manager) to solve it.

- 4.34 The RCF case studies highlighted problems with the way this funding stream was introduced and has been administered. From the beginning, the money was seen as being local government's, already having been top-sliced from the local government settlement. As mentioned above, there was a short timeframe to apply and some projects started late due to delays attributed to Welsh Government. The funding is confirmed year-on-year, which means staff can only be appointed on year-long contracts and are more likely to 'move on' as a result. Then during the funding period, the Welsh Government requested funding cuts in the third year of up to 50% in some cases, which caused project plans to be curtailed or amended. Finally, the quarterly reports to Welsh Government were not perceived as being useful or relevant by most projects.
- 4.35 This situation raises the question of the purpose of RCF and the extent to which it was designed as a mechanism to get some organisations to collaborate that may have been reluctant. If this was a primary reason for the funding, it became a very blunt instrument and Welsh Government needed to be both more explicit in its aims and request local authorities to tailor their bids to policy priorities. Civil servants also required more understanding of the projects to provide robust assessments and ensure that the funding provided was fit for purpose and offered value for money.
- 4.36 Despite these criticisms, the RCF resource has provided flexibility for projects in how to respond to service improvement issues and to trial new ways of working. In one case, it has been used alongside other resources to not only provide additional project manager capacity but also as leverage to get significant additional funding that was

available from Welsh Government to improve the integration of health and social care. This longer timescale and increased funding clearly contributed to achieving measurable service improvements, efficiencies and citizen outcomes.

- 4.37 The resource has acted as an incentive to get all the key partners around the table and therefore facilitated collaboration, but in the majority of cases, the level of resources and the time needed to achieve the desired outcomes far exceeded that covered by RCF.
- 4.38 Governments often provide relatively small pots of funding on an ad hoc basis, when they could be aligned towards an overall vision of public service improvement. There needs to be more recognition that a series of different funding sources spanning two to three years of funding is unlikely to bring about transformational change on its own.

Recommendations

For the Welsh Government, we suggest:

- The aims of any new funding scheme and how it supports and links to current policy initiatives, and/or other Welsh Government funding, needs to be clearly articulated.
- Provide sufficient time for organisations to respond to calls for proposals in a considered manner – whether these are new projects or build on existing change projects.
- Design reporting arrangements which are useful for project review and accountability to both the recipient of funding and the Welsh Government

For organisations delivering collaborative projects, we suggest:

- There is a clear need to provide evidence on whether there are efficiencies to be made by establishing regional systems, over and above agencies collaborating locally or agencies operating alone (e.g. through option appraisal, cost-benefit analysis).
- Set clear expectations of how each partner is going to contribute to and benefit from the collaboration.

- Set measurable outcomes and targets appropriate to the timescales of the funding and what a project can realistically achieve and influence.
- Consider providing continued funding to support those projects which have shown to be successful and produced outcomes or have the strong potential to do so.

Sharing learning on regional collaboration

A consistent message on enablers of collaboration

4.39 Our previous research on collaboration in Wales has concluded that there are a range of factors that contribute to the achievement of outcomes (Martin et al. 2013, Welsh Government 2016, Welsh Government 2015a; 2016). There is a great deal of consistency, over time, on what seems to make collaboration work. Leadership and the role played by both senior managers, politicians and public bodies (such as LSBs) makes a difference. Having sufficient funding to employ a dedicated project manager is important operationally. These leaders and project managers need to work within clear governance arrangements where there are mechanisms to provide accountability and to manage performance. The active involvement of staff at all levels internally and having all partner organisations on board will also determine whether a collaborative project is likely to deliver. Engaging citizens and service users through co-production and feedback has also been shown to be an enabler of change. Ultimately, there needs to be a clear vision which everyone is signed up to and outcome measures which are ambitious and realistic. Finally, where collaboration builds on existing arrangements is likely to determine the chances of success.

4.40 Collaboration has been at the heart of the Welsh Government's approach to public service delivery for a decade, but the jury is still out on whether a voluntary approach to collaboration can produce

outcomes at sufficient pace. As we have shown above, the enablers of and barriers to collaboration, and how these determine whether and what outcomes are achieved, are clear, so it is now the time to absorb these and start to put the learning into practice.

- 4.41 We have shown above the key factors that need to be in place to give collaborative projects the best chance of success. This will be of use to future collaboration projects, but we also need to understand how learning can be shared and used, not only between project managers but with others involved in the regional partnerships in a way that impacts on behaviour change and the transfer of good practice. Good internal communications are important for all collaborative activities. Our case studies revealed that there needs to be a consistent 'one voice' coming from the project. In general, insufficient attention has been given to disseminating the 'good news' stories from RCF projects, as was found in the ESF-LSB evaluation. To be effective for learning, this evidence needs to be communicated in a way that will inform and facilitate discussion within and between the Welsh Government, the WLGA and local authorities about 'what works' well (and not so well) in regional collaboration and why.
- 4.42 The research has produced consistent evidence on those factors which enable regional collaboration to work more effectively to underpin the projects' 'stories'. Understanding about what constitutes good practice and how this can be applied to other projects and/or replicated in other contexts more widely, will provide useful lessons for all parts of the public sector in the future. In addition, we need to learn more about the impact of sharing learning on collaborative projects' performance.
- 4.43 We have significant concerns, however, about the extent to which research findings from a series of evaluations on collaboration are being synthesised and utilised and have found no evidence of any structured approach to this nationally, regionally or locally. There is a shared responsibility for learning from both the funder and the recipient, but it looks as if learning is falling between the cracks to the detriment of either funder or recipient benefiting.

Recommendations

- The progress of and outcomes from change projects need to be effectively communicated to internal and external audiences through a range of media to aid 'buy-in' and make the case for sustaining change, through mainstreaming or further funding.
- The Welsh Government is in the best position to provide leadership, working with others, in disseminating 'good practice' on regional collaboration to the wider sector to effect change.

The sustainability of projects

- 4.44 This evaluation has considered how the sustainability of projects can be secured either through embedding collaborative working as 'business as usual' and/or understanding what helps more specific projects secure the future funding and buy-in that they need to continue'?
- 4.45 In some cases, projects have put systems in place for further joint working and collaborative activities are continuing as 'business as usual'. Ongoing relationships will depend upon the continuing commitment to collaboration from partners and the financial environment. Our evidence suggests that there needs to be some realism about the timescale and staff capacity needed to embed changes in projects resulting from short-term funding. In some cases, the RCF funding has been used to set the foundations for the future and further resource is needed both for project management and service and organisational change to stand any chance of producing significant outcomes.

Recommendations

- Organisations in receipt of time-limited funding should be required to develop legacy plans to sustain or mainstream innovative approaches and continue delivering beneficial

outcomes. The scope of these plans should cover skills retention and succession planning, but would clearly vary according to the nature of the approach or project in question.

The policy implications of pursuing collaboration in difficult financial times

- 4.46 In the current financial climate, it is important to use this evaluation to address the question of 'how can the Welsh Government ensure messages are being given to local authorities that move beyond short-term funding for collaboration and towards other instruments to encourage groups of authorities to make collaboration work and be sustained organically'?
- 4.47 The main challenge that complex projects such as Western Bay and North Wales Economic Ambition Board are facing is trying to embed transformational change in a context of financial constraints, which are likely to get worse. Even though there was widespread understanding that, in the long run, the only way to make savings or at least reduce costs, while maintaining or improving quality was through collaborative working at a regional level, there was also recognition that such efficiencies would take time to materialise and that the change process itself needed financial resources.
- 4.48 There are still some concerns that regional collaboration is competing with 'the day job'. This is exacerbated by the level of cuts that need to be made and seems to be less about understanding the benefits of collaboration and more that there has been a decrease in the numbers of middle to senior staff who are being asked to develop new ways of working while still managing essential core services.
- 4.49 In some cases, regional systems are working to some extent in parallel with local systems which is bureaucratic and costly. As collaborative arrangements mature, this needs to lead to the pooling or significant aligning of resources.
- 4.50 There are opportunities for local authorities to apply for other sources of funding to pursue collaborative working, such as Invest to Save

(which involves paying back an interest-free loan), but only a small minority of councils have made applications.

Support from Welsh Government

- 4.51 While our evidence suggests that collaborative arrangements between authorities have improved, there is some frustration about the lack of joined-up working within Welsh Government and how this can potentially undermine or slow down progress in regions. One project complained about having to deal with a number of service areas within government, while another project had concerns about mixed messages being sent out by different parts of the Welsh Government – notably Social Services (Health and Social Care) and Local Government.
- 4.52 While the RCF projects all agreed that collaborative projects were a necessity to improve service delivery, the spectre of local government reorganisation created significant uncertainty and made it a difficult time to be working together. There needs to be a clear steer from the Welsh Government that collaboration across local authority boundaries is likely to be the way forward and that in key service areas, collaboration could be made mandatory.

Policy implications

- 4.53 We have shown that there are both advantages and disadvantages of RCF as an approach to funding collaboration. Although it has acted as a catalyst for driving or intensifying collaboration on existing projects, it does not take into account the timescales or amount of resources needed for transformational change in different organisational, service and policy contexts. The resource was simply divided across regions on a proportional basis rather than according to the quality of a project's design or likely outcomes. If RCF has not enabled a critical level of progress to be attained by the end of the funding period, returns from the investment could be at risk in the present financial climate.

- 4.54 Assessing the additionality of RCF raises the question whether and/or why councils could not have targeted resource to improve collaborative working without RCF. We heard that the lack of progress on collaboration was put down to the inward focus of some local authorities and a reticence to accept assistance from elsewhere. Allowing collaboration to be undertaken on a voluntary basis for so long has slowed the pace of change down. Now is the time to quicken the pace and allowing collaborations to occur on an ad hoc basis is not the answer. In other places, RCF has provided the additional resources required for project management and to support governance arrangements through dedicated staff which would have been difficult to resource from the individual councils. The RCF thus enabled an adequately supported collaborative approach to be tested while minimising potential risks to partners.
- 4.55 Although collaboration has been pushed by the Welsh Government for a decade, some service areas seem to have made little progress in this area. The resource provided by RCF for a non-statutory service like economic development has had a positive effect on encouraging a more joined-up way of improving services and enabled more sceptical councils to realise that collaboration can deliver more than the sum of the parts.
- 4.56 In a number of cases, it appears important that the project was designed from the 'bottom-up' whereby collaborative arrangements have developed amongst partners rather than being imposed on them by the Welsh Government. This bottom-up approach means that senior managers and local politicians have a personal stake in the project and can allocate internal resources to co-ordinate activities and help to ensure that it delivers.
- 4.57 This ownership and commitment of RCF-funded projects by the partners involved has had knock-on effects in other policy and service areas. This includes additional joint appointments and joint bids for funding.
- 4.58 This evidence, in conjunction with that from the ESF-LSB evaluation, suggests that the Welsh Government should work with local

authorities to encourage and support collaboration as an effective way to drive improvements in specific services and citizen outcome areas. This would mean a move away from generic programmes to fund collaboration per se and towards supporting projects that authorities have started to work on jointly by reducing the risks of investing in costly new infrastructure and processes that are required to deliver long-term transformational change.

Recommendations for Welsh Government

- Use this evaluation and other available evidence to review funding arrangements for regional collaboration (by using incentives and/or competition) as this will continue to be required as a way of improving services, efficiencies and outcomes.
- Look to support ‘bottom-up’ transformational change projects in priority service and policy areas (e.g. integrated health and social care, economic development).
- Ensure levels and timescales of funding are flexible and tailored to the service area, desired service outcomes and change mechanisms required.
- Work with public services to design any future collaboration initiatives. Ensure that projects have set clear aims and outcomes using appropriate measures, have strong governance and accountability processes in place, and have the ability to mainstream or sustain effective practice.

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Appendix 1: Overview of RCF-funded projects

Project	Project Key	Area	Tranche	Description
Remodelling Adult Social Care Services and integration with health	CF01	Cardiff and Vale	1	In collaboration with the UHB, Cardiff and Vale will re-design current social care and health service models for key population groups within their communities: older people who are frail or suffering cognitive impairment; people with learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities, and adults with mental health problems.
Regionalising Regulatory Services (Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend)	CF02	Cardiff and Vale	1	The project aims to bring the Regulatory Services operated by the three Councils (Bridgend is included in this bid) under a single management structure. The term Regulatory Service embraces the Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing functions.
Cardiff and Vale Joint Local Service Board (LSB)	CF03	Cardiff and Vale	1	The project will provide extra capacity to support the Cardiff Partnership Board and the Vale of Glamorgan Local Service Board to develop mechanisms for identifying shared priorities and the means with which to address them collectively.
CYD Cymru – Wales together (Energy procurement)	CF04	Cardiff and Vale	1	The CYD CYMRU project aims to reduce energy bills for people in Wales through collective buying of energy. Those vulnerable to fuel and financial poverty will be targeted for involvement.
Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)	CF05	Cardiff and Vale	1	The project aims to develop a multiagency service model across the South East Wales region, in line with evolving needs, that helps tackle sexual violence in communities. The project will expand capacity to accommodate increasing demand, providing project support for wider/ cross-regional acute service to complement the locally delivered non-clinical elements of SARC.
Alcohol Treatment Centre	CF06	Cardiff and Vale	1	The project aims to reduce the pressure on A&E resources at times when there is a predicted increase in demand. The specific aims of the project are to reduce admission to emergency departments by patients who were intoxicated by alcohol, reduce the number of emergency ambulances

Project	Project Key	Area	Tranche	Description
				dealing with clients who were intoxicated by alcohol, quicker turnaround time for ambulances due to reduced clinical handover time and a safe area where these vulnerable individuals can be assisted. There is also an opportunity for clients to receive brief interventions in respect to their alcohol use at an appropriate time in the ATCs care.
Cwm Taf ICT enabled Schools Transformation Programme	CT13	Cwm Taf	1	Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC and Merthyr Tydfil CBC are working collaboratively, within the Cwm Taf RCB footprint, to transform our education provision via a holistic and innovative use of Information, Communications Technology or ICT as an enabler to raise standards of education and improve outcomes for learners.
Regional Management Information Service (Schools)	NW15	North Wales	1	The project will cease existence of the six local teams and form a new Regional MI Team. This will transform the way MI services are delivered and the way authorities operate will change with the new Regional MI Service addressing Consortium priorities, which all six authorities will agree, and having the capability to meet specific justifiable individual authority needs. The outcome will be agreement on data to be held and its format by every authority, transformed business processes being used in every authority and common reporting for both the Consortium and individual authorities within it.
Transforming Access to Health & Social Care Services	NW11	North Wales	1	This project will support the development of a new model for access to Health and Social Care Services in the community. This model will be developed regionally but delivered locally and will provide an effectively co-ordinated single point of access for advice, assessment and care co-ordination for adults across North Wales. It includes the provision of responsive information, advice and signposting to a range of community support in order to empower, increase well-being and support the independence of citizens.

Project	Project Key	Area	Tranche	Description
Commissioning new services	NW24	North Wales	2	Developing new service models for commissioning social services, work to facilitate new and emerging markets and work to develop business cases for transforming or developing new models or services.
Human Trafficking	NW27	North Wales	2	This project will provide three-year funding for a full-time temporary North Wales Regional Anti Human Trafficking Co-ordinator.
Multi-agency safeguarding hub (referrals)	NW26	North Wales	2	Currently each PPU manages the referral and risk assessment process separately from each other and separately from partner agencies. North Wales Police, in conjunction with Wrexham County Council and BCUHB, is examining the multi-agency processes and methods used to safeguard vulnerable people focusing upon the County of Wrexham.
Safeguarding (systems) and workforce	NW25	North Wales	2	Responding to the Social Services and Well-being Bill and the significant change to the current systems for delivery of safeguarding on a multi-agency basis. This will align systems across North Wales, creating a shadow LSCB and will enable a closer relationship between adult safeguarding systems and those for children.
Economic Ambition Board (Skills)	NW29	North Wales	3	The project aims to deliver a North Wales regional approach that covers all six local authorities to further accelerate the transformation of public services associated with learning and skills for the benefit of its citizens and the regional economy. This investment will enable the Employment and Skills Group to fulfil its ambitions for upgrading the skills base, reducing economic inactivity and tackling youth employment by commissioning an Employment and Skills Plan for North Wales.
Three Counties Procurement	NW30	North Wales	3	Based on consultancy work commissioned by the six North Wales local authorities there exists an opportunity to fundamentally revisit the way procurement is structured within North Wales

Project	Project Key	Area	Tranche	Description
Dementia	NW31	North Wales	3	There is an increasing number of people living with dementia, many of whom require support from social care and NHS services. This is a collaborative project between the six North Wales local authorities, the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, independent sector providers, voluntary sector e.g. Alzheimer's society, Care Council for Wales, CSSIW and Bangor University Dementia Services Development Centre.
North Wales Trading Standards	NW32	North Wales	3	This project will bring together the six North Wales Public Protection Services to prepare a business case and undertake an options appraisal to explore possible models for delivering services in the future. The outcome is likely to involve structural change on a regional or sub-regional basis.
Economic Ambition Board	NW33	North Wales	3	To work collaboratively across six local authorities, the private, public and third sectors to transform the economy in four priority areas: supply chain development; infrastructure and connectivity; skills and employment; and marketing and communication.
Regional Learning Partnership Central and South West Wales	MW10	Mid and West Wales	1	The project will deliver a dynamic regional approach to skills and employment that embraces all six local authorities and their partners in central and South West Wales to accelerate the transformation of public services associated with learning and skills for the benefit of its citizens and the regional economy. It will enable the RLP to fulfil its ambitions for transformational change through piloting an approach co-ordinating and commissioning an employment and skills programme for central and South West Wales.
Caring for the future: Delivering sustainable Social Services	MW07	Mid and West Wales	1	The creation of a new shared service to provide a strategic framework for co-ordinating and delivering a range of health and social care programmes across the region, maximising resources available, reducing duplication, achieving consistency and bringing about service

Project	Project Key	Area	Tranche	Description
				improvement and transformational change in how we jointly commission and procure high quality services at a better price, improving outcomes for citizens in the region. The regional service will better liaise with the health service to drive collaboration and deepen integration at a faster pace.
Regional Shared School Improvement Service hub integration	MW14	Mid and West Wales	1	To take education collaboration in school improvement to a new level by pooling School Improvement Services at hub levels within the regional education consortium. This single service approach will add resilience, better consistency and challenge and build on strengths across the local authorities involved. It will avoid duplication and better align the service to support and challenge schools.
Legal Central and South West Wales Shared Legal Services	MW08	Mid and West Wales	1	The aim of this proposal is to build on a successful partnership, taking a step change in Shared Legal Services, initiating a transformation process of the way legal services are delivered in central and South West Wales. The key elements of the proposal are: project management; trainee solicitors; joint commercial legal team; file sharing portal; regional personal injury solicitors.
Central and South West Wales Shared ICT Services'	MW09	Mid and West Wales	1	The aim of this transformational project is to create a new Shared Regional ICT resource. The newly established regional project team will develop a new regional business case, specification and implement ICT solutions on a wider regional basis. Several areas of regional ICT shared service delivery have been identified for consideration including GIS; public protection; legal file sharing portal and feasibility of education admissions and transfers; implementation of "trusts" regionally and regional mobile app. approach.
Western Bay Health and Social Care (WBHSC) Programme	WB12	Western Bay	1	Develop a Learning Disability service - it will share capacity and competence across health and social care services to optimise the delivery of high quality services. It will focus on collaborative procurement and commissioning; transforming established processes to eliminate waste and

Project	Project Key	Area	Tranche	Description
				develop new models of service delivery whilst encouraging greater innovation by joining up services around the citizen, especially those with complex needs. Develop a Mental Health Service - this will promote mental well-being by building individual resilience through less reliance on inpatient beds; redesigning community support to enable people to live in their communities and establish meaningful service user involvement in service design, together with the third sector.
Youth Offending	WB28	Western Bay	2	To form a transition team to plan and deliver the amalgamation of Youth Offending and subsequently Community Safety activities across the region. The issues are complex, and include staffing and management structures, legal issues, budgetary and financial arrangements, accountability and scrutiny arrangements, staffing and HR issues as well as looking at practice policies and procedures, database and ICT issues etc and how these will be implemented. The intention is to establish a small team to work exclusively on these issues with an intent to deliver amalgamation by April 1st 2014.
Social Services, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities	GT17	Gwent	2	The project is specifically focused on transforming the delivery of service across six organisations and voluntary sector partners to reduce duplication to improve outcomes to service users, and seek innovative ways to deliver services which greater economies of scale and cross agency working can provide.
Gwent Safeguarding	GT18	Gwent	2	To merge the five existing Local Safeguarding Children Boards in South East Wales to create one South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board. The intent is to develop an effective and safe Board that improves safeguarding children arrangements and thus improves outcomes for children and young people across the region.

Project	Project Key	Area	Tranche	Description
Mitigating the effects of Welfare Reform	GT19	Gwent	2	This project will align local delivery ameliorating the consequences of welfare reform, tackling poverty and combating financial exclusion. The project manager will work across Gwent developing a workforce to professionalise, unify and up-skill existing staff giving the ability to provide advice at four levels – signposting, case working, specialist and advanced – as recommended by the Institute of Money Advisors.
'In one place'	GT20	Gwent	2	To establish a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) that facilitates a collaborative approach to dealing with the accommodation needs of people with complex health and social care needs, in one place; to agree to separate accommodation and care support requirements in the future - wherever possible; and to align health, social care and housing planning processes to ensure that current and future accommodation (and care and support) needs are addressed at the earliest opportunity.
Trading Standards	GT22	Gwent	2	This Project focuses on the establishment of a new Gwent Trading Standards Service. It is proposed that the Trading Standards Services of the five local authorities in Gwent are brought together to establish a service of approximately 70 staff operating across the Gwent region. Alternative models of collaborative service delivery can also be given further consideration within the Project.
LIFT	GT23	Gwent	2	'Breaking the Cycle' is a community based, lifestyle-improvement change programme, that addresses key barriers that inhibit young people (14-24) achieving their potential, securing sustained employment and becoming active citizens within their communities. The project takes a family-focused approach to attempt to break the intergenerational cycle of benefit dependency and poor health.

Appendix 2: Summary of Case studies

Name of Project	Region	Policy theme	Grant	Summary description of aims
<i>RCF funded projects</i>				
Western Bay	South west	Health and social care	£3,797,000 RCF 3 years (April 2013 – March 2016)	To provide a strategic mechanism for co-ordinating a programme of change in a suite of health and social care projects focusing on: community (older people's) services; prevention and well-being; and contracting and procurement, to address issues that the four partners (three councils and Health Board) had identified as a common concern.
North Wales Economic Ambition Board	North	Economic development	£334,000 3 years (April 2013 – March 2016)	To work collaboratively across six local authorities, the private, public and third sectors to transform the economy in four priority areas: supply chain development; infrastructure and connectivity; skills and employment; and marketing and communication.
Regional Shared School Improvement Service Hub Integration	Mid Wales	Education	£1.2m 3 years (April 2013 – March 2016)	To drive school improvement by pooling school improvement services at hub levels within the regional education consortium.
ICT Enabled Schools Transformation Programme	South east	Education	£2,638,000 3 years (April 2013 – March 2016)	To transform education in the region using a single, centralised integrated Management Information System (MIS) which would hold real time pupil information across the two councils; and, to encourage the widespread use of Microsoft IT Academy (MITA) across schools within RCT.
<i>ESF-WLGA funded projects</i>				
North Wales Legal Services	North	Legal services	£214,700 (£144,933 ESF £69,767 WLGA) Sept 2012 – Dec 2014	To improve the efficiency of legal services by reducing total net costs and to improve the quality of legal services across the region (all six authorities).

Appendix 3: Meta-review of ESF-WLGA funded projects

PROJECT	KEY PARTNERS	BUDGET (ACTUAL)	DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS	AIMS/ OBJECTIVES
Transforming Transport in North Wales	Denbighshire CBC (lead) with the other five North Wales authorities		<p>The project was scaled down shortly after funding and rather than developing a single hub, five work streams being identified for collaborative working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passenger Information. • Community Transport. • Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. • Concessionary Travel Scheme. • Road Safety. 	<p>Original aim was to develop a single hub for the delivery of all local authority transport services in North Wales to support greater co-ordination, reduce administration costs and duplication, and provide customers with an enhanced service.</p> <p>Subsequently scaled down to improve collaborative working and transport services across North Wales.</p>
Central Wales Infrastructure Collaboration (CWIC)	Ceredigion LSB (lead), Powys LSB, Ceredigion and Powys County Councils	£86,956	The project focused on four areas: Property services, Engineering Strategy, Engineering Operations and Road and Transport Safety. Investment in skills and capacity of officer seconded into virtual Programme Office.	To provide more resilient structure to deliver 'high quality infrastructure services' – and to test hypothesis of whether this will increase efficiency and improve services.
Comprehensive Collaborative Regional Waste Programme (Mid Wales)	Ceredigion LSB (lead), Powys LSB, Ceredigion and Powys County Councils	£90,931	Investing in dedicated programme management capacity to consolidate and deliver sustainable waste solutions in: food and green waste; residual waste treatment and development of other collaborative opportunities	To deliver more efficient and robust waste services for the participating authorities through closer collaboration.

PROJECT	KEY PARTNERS	BUDGET (ACTUAL)	DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS	AIMS/ OBJECTIVES
Collaborative Commissioning of Social Care in South East Wales with a focus on Telecare/ Telehealth and Accommodation with Care	Torfaen and Rhondda Cynon Taf LSBs (joint lead)	£282,500	The project focused on Telecare/ Assistive Technology and 'Accommodation with care' (other elements covered by Invest to Save and other funding). Two Project Managers appointed – one for each strand.	To deliver a collaborative corporate support service to rationalise the use of resources and improve service capacity to support councils through existing and future transformational change programmes to: - reduce support service costs in the public sector; and - share expertise and enable economies of scale.
Strategic Planning and Highways Service Delivery in South East Wales	Bridgend LSB (lead), South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA) which includes all 10 South East Wales local authorities.	£157,259	The project was supported by a Project Manager and jointly owned by 10 LAs, with Director level governance and officer working groups.	To develop recommendations for a sustainable modern integrated public transport system across South East Wales to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist economic growth and job creation; • improve accessibility for economically inactive people to employment centres; • promote social cohesion; and • reduce poverty.

PROJECT	KEY PARTNERS	BUDGET (ACTUAL)	DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS	AIMS/ OBJECTIVES
Shared Legal Services and Shared ICT Services in South West Wales	Carmarthenshire LSB (lead) with five LAs: Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot	£151,830	Continues shared legal services project and uses learning from this to develop shared ICT services through joint procurement approach. One project manager across both service areas	To deliver more efficient and robust services through closer collaboration. By sharing project management resource across two service areas, aims to transfer knowledge and experience between shared services and develop project management capacity in the region.
Western Bay Health & Social Care Programme¹	Swansea LSB (lead), City and County of Swansea; Bridgend CBC; Neath Port Talbot CBC and ABMU Health Board	£299,400*	The project supported two project managers: One Project Manager for the Adult Learning Disability Project which is a large, complex project with multiple work streams. A second Project Manager for Adult Mental Health and Older People Projects, which have multiple interdependencies	To develop a regional response that addresses the significant financial challenges and increasing demand facing the three local authorities and the ABMU Health Board and optimises collective effort to deliver high value sustainable Health and Social Services.

¹ Western Bay was included in the ESF-WLGA meta-review and then as a full RCF case study