Department for Education

RISE National Delivery Partnership - Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. Background and Context

In February 2025, the Department for Education launched Regional Improvement in Standards and Excellence (RISE), establishing RISE teams that will deliver a Targeted service to schools in greatest need and a universal service to all schools. In April 2025, we launched our RISE offer, including a second cohort of RISE schools (following an initial test-and-learn cohort) and a Universal service focused around four national priorities. These priorities are attendance; attainment; inclusive mainstream; and reception year quality.

In June 2026 we published the RISE regional plans, which set out how Universal RISE will be delivered in each of England's nine regions. These form an important point of reference for activity across the four national priorities – and more widely – over the years ahead.

RISE is central to the government's ambition to raise standards and expand opportunity for children and young people. By strengthening school improvement capacity, fostering collaboration and sharing effective practice, it aims to improve outcomes and reduce barriers to success. Supporting this work, the National Delivery Partnership brings together leaders from education, higher education, civic leadership, employers, philanthropy and public services to provide strategic advice, challenge and partnership leadership, helping to strengthen educational pathways and support more young people to thrive aiming to reduce the risk of disengagement from education.

2. Purpose of the group

The National Delivery Partnership provides strategic oversight and partnership leadership for RISE, acting as the national forum that connects and amplifies learning from Regional Delivery Partnerships. It brings together representatives from across education, higher education, employers, civic organisations and the wider public sector to strengthen school improvement capacity, share effective practice and support improved outcomes for children and young people.

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The overarching aim of the National Delivery Partnership is to act as the national partnership forum for RISE and school improvement, including:

- amplify learning and intelligence emerging from Regional Delivery Partnerships, with reference to the RISE regional plans;
- support Regional Delivery Partnerships by sharing insight, challenge and learning on delivery issues, and recommending areas for further review where appropriate.
- identify opportunities to strengthen school improvement capacity;
- share evidence, research and effective practice;
- build collaboration between education, civic and employer partners;
- advise on emerging risks, barriers and opportunities affecting delivery of regional partnerships and/or the wider RISE Programme;
- support the development of sustainable improvement capacity across regions.

3. Decision making authority

The Board is advisory and does not exercise formal decision-making authority over RISE funding, programme delivery, regulatory activity or ministerial decisions.

Recommendations made by the Board may be considered by:

- RISE Programme Board
- RISE/ Standards & Intervention Executive Leadership
- Regions Group Leadership
- Ministers

The Board may commission thematic discussions, task & finish groups, evidence reviews or recommendations for consideration by Ministers, RISE Programme Board and other governance bodies. We also may approach individual members for targeted advice and support where appropriate.

Escalation routes for urgent issues will be via the Chair or Deputy Chair to the RISE Programme Board.

See Governance Section 8 for further information on how the National Delivery Partnership relates to wider forums such as Regional Delivery Partnerships, and feeds into wider programme governance and reporting.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

The group will be co-chaired by Minister Georgia Gould, Minister of State for School Standards and Early Education, and Tim Coulson, Director General, Regions Group, DfE.

The Deputy Chair will be Vanessa Ogden, RISE Programme Sponsor, who will support the Co-Chairs, provide continuity of leadership and oversee the operation of the Board.

The Co-Chairs and Deputy Chair will:

- Lead and facilitate meetings, ensuring the Board remains focused on its purpose and priorities.
- Represent the Board within wider RISE governance and ministerial structures.
- Promote effective collaboration between national and regional partners.
- Escalate significant risks, issues or recommendations through appropriate governance routes.
- Provide strategic direction for the Board's work programme.

Members will join the group by invite only, and membership will be reviewed biannually to ensure it remains representative of the wider schools sector.

Members are expected to:

- Provide strategic advice, insight and constructive challenge on the delivery and development of RISE.
- Consider emerging intelligence, risks and opportunities identified through Regional Delivery Partnership Boards and advise on national implications.
- Share evidence, insight and effective practice from their organisations, sectors and regions.
- Champion collaboration between education, higher education, employers, civic and community partners.
- Support alignment between the National Delivery Partnership Board and Regional Delivery Partnership Boards.
- Act as ambassadors for the aims of RISE and the Opportunity Mission.

A dedicated secretariat from the **RISE Engagement Team and RISE PMO** will coordinate agendas, papers, actions and governance arrangements and act as the primary point of contact for members.

5. Membership

The National Delivery Partnership Board will bring together representatives from across education, higher education, employers, civic organisations and wider partners to provide strategic advice, challenge and partnership leadership for RISE.

The members of this operations group will be as follows:

DfE Permanent Attendees

- **Co-Chairs:** Minister Georgia Gould, Minister of State for School Standards; Tim Coulson, Director General, Regions Group, DfE

- **Deputy Chair:** Vanessa Ogden, RISE Programme Sponsor & Regional Director for London, DfE
- Stella Pearson, RISE Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), DfE
- Beth Henshaw, RISE Programme Director, DfE
- Roger Cotes, Director for Post-16 Education, DfE

Permanent Regional Attendees

- Amanda Corcoran, Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- Gail Brown, Ebor Academy Trust, ASCL
- Dr Jennifer Blunden, Truro and Penwith Academy Trust (TPAT)
- Joanne Sanchez-Thompson, Learning for Life Education Trust, National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
- John Camp, Compass Partnership of Schools, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- Lee Wilson, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, Confederation of School Trusts (CST)
- Mark Davis, Director of Education (DDE) for Lichfield Diocese, Church of England
- Rebecca Meredith CBE, Transform Trust
- Stephen Wheatley, All Saints Catholic Academy Trust, Catholic Education Service (CES)
- Tony Wilson, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

Permanent National Attendees (TBC)

- Prof Becky Francis — Education Endowment Foundation
- Gina Cicerone, CEO Fair Education Alliance (represented by Rachel Parkin)
- Heather Sandys – Association of Directors of Children's Services
- Prof Helen Driscoll — University of Sunderland, (higher education/FE representative)
- James Toop, Teach First
- Jemma Read, Bloomberg
- John Barneby, National Institute of Teaching representative
- Dr Kate Chhatwal, Challenge Partners
- Lisa O'Loughlin, CEO East Lancashire Learning Group
- Ndidi Okezie, Business in the Community
- Nick Wright, UBS
- Paul Whiteman, NAHT
- Pepe Di'Iasio, ASCL
- Prof Qing Gu, UCL Institute of Education
- Steve Rollett, CST
- Sir Steve Taylor, Queen Street Group

Ad Hoc Attendees

Regional Delivery Partnership Board Co-Chairs and other representatives may be invited to attend meetings on an ad hoc basis to present regional priorities, share effective practice or contribute to specific agenda items.

Membership will be reviewed biannually to ensure the Board remains representative of national, regional and sector perspectives and aligns with the strategic objectives of RISE.

6. Frequency and logistics of meetings

Meetings will be held termly via Microsoft Teams, unless otherwise agreed.

Papers will be circulated at least three working days in advance by RISE PMO/ the Chair.

Recommendations will be agreed by consensus and recorded in the minutes.

Additional sessions and working groups may be arranged as necessary.

The Board will maintain a strong relationship with Regional Delivery Partnership Boards, using intelligence, learning and emerging themes from regional partnerships to inform national discussion and priorities. The Board will also provide advice, challenge and support to Regional Delivery Partnership Boards and help share effective practice, evidence and strategic priorities across the wider RISE system.

A summary dashboard of key delivery, partnership and impact measures, together with emerging themes from Regional Delivery Partnership Boards, will be provided to support discussion and strategic oversight.

The group will operate within the RISE governance framework and escalate issues to RISE Programme Board, via the chair or deputy chair as required. The ToR will be reviewed biannually or at key programme milestones to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

7. Confidentiality and conflicts of interest

Meeting minutes will be published on gov.uk to ensure transparency. Presentation slides may be shared externally where the PMO has clearly marked them as shareable.

While the group encourages open and constructive discussion, certain topics may require confidentiality due to their sensitive nature. Members are expected to respect these boundaries and handle information responsibly.

All members must declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest at the start of each meeting and prior to consideration of any agenda item where such a

conflict may arise. The Co-Chairs may determine that a member should not participate in specific discussions where a significant conflict exists.

Members also have the option to contact the RISE PMO outside of meetings to raise any concerns or declare conflicts confidentially.

8. Wider RISE Governance

The National Delivery Partnership Board acts as the principal national partnership forum within the RISE governance framework, providing a mechanism for insights, risks, opportunities and effective practice to be shared between Regional Delivery Partnership Boards, RISE leadership and Ministers.

It does not hold formal decision-making authority for the RISE programme.

The Board will maintain a close relationship with Regional Delivery Partnership Boards, providing a mechanism to:

- gather and consider intelligence, emerging issues and effective practice from across regions;
- identify national themes, opportunities and barriers to improvement;
- strengthen collaboration between national and regional partners; and
- support the dissemination of learning and best practice across the RISE system.
- advise and provide support by sharing insight, challenge and learning on delivery issues.

Recommendations, evidence and key insights from the Board may be escalated through the Co-Chairs, Deputy Chair, RISE Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and Programme Director to the appropriate governance forums, including the RISE Programme Board, Regions Group leadership and Ministers, as appropriate.

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