Review of the Impact of Regional Improvement Collaboratives on Pupils and Practitioners

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Executive Summary

About this Report

This report sets out the key themes and findings of a rapid Review of the impact that Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) have had on supporting pupils and practitioners. This review was commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, as part of the education reform programme, to inform decisions on roles, responsibilities and relationships across the system in the delivery of educational improvement support.

Further detail on the Review approach and context is set out in Part 1 of this report.

Key Themes

- RIC engagement with, and support to, pupils and practitioners across early years, primary, special and secondary settings has continued to expand and deepen since the last evaluation of the RICs[1].

- evaluation of RIC supports by practitioners who are directly engaged with RICs are consistently strong.

- while, as with other parts of a complex system, the collective impact of RIC supports on improved outcomes for children and young people cannot be quantified, a wide and increasing range of practitioner and pupil programmes are clearly evidenced.

- while the number of staff engaged in regional activities at any time remains a minority, support has continued to increase with evidence suggesting that approximately 30% of schools engaged in some form of RIC activity across a school year, whether directly or through supports provided to school leaders and practitioners.

- the use of research, data and evidence to focus and shape RIC supports, including evaluation from practitioners and others, is evidenced strongly.

- RICs have continued to strengthen collaboration across and between local authorities, between RICs and with other partners.

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[1] Regional Improvement Collaboratives: review - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

Summary Findings

Engagement and Impact – Pupils and Practitioners

RICs have evidenced a wide range of engagement with, and support to, leaders and practitioners across early years, primary, special and secondary settings. This includes evidence on the sharing of information and best practice, the facilitation of staff networks, the on-line and in-person provision of leadership and pedagogical training, production and dissemination of guidance, toolkits and other resources. In some cases this included more bespoke, session-long collaboration and cohort-focussed programmes of support.

In the most recent session for which each RIC has provided evidence, RICs have evidenced varying levels of network, workstream and programme supports to around 17,450 practitioners and leaders and with approximately 640 schools across Scotland. While it has not been possible in this Review to confirm the breakdown of all interactions across leaders, teachers and other school and ELC staff, the information provided indicates that RIC programmes may be engaging with approximately 30% of schools across a session/year (through direct school engagements and/or via leader and practitioner supports).

While a majority of evidence provided to this review focuses on professional learning and leadership support provided directly to practitioners, each RIC has also provided evidence of support provided directly to and/or designed around the needs of pupils, including the provision of online learning support and advanced higher courses. In considering this evidence, readers may wish to note that RICs were established primarily to provide improvement support to leaders and practitioners and not directly to pupils.

User evaluation and feedback on RIC supports is consistently positive and some programmes have evidenced or reported direct improvements as a result of specific interventions. However, RICs operate within a complex system and a number of overlapping factors and supports will contribute to improved learning outcomes for children and young people. Similar to other parts of that system and recognising that the impact of some supports can be more clearly evidenced than others, it is not possible to robustly differentiate or quantify the totality of RIC impact in relation to learning outcomes.

Deepening Collaboration

Collaboration between local authorities within each RIC continues to deepen, with evidence of firmly embedded governance and reporting structures providing strategic oversight and accountability and strengthening buy-in across local authority members. Cross-RIC working has also evolved and expanded, with multiple RICs collaborating across a range of initiatives, to share learning across the system, including supports for pupils and practitioners.

All RICs have demonstrated engagement with academics and educational research, to inform collaborative approaches, strengthen the evaluation of regional support, and to ensure that design and delivery of pedagogical and other supports to practitioners and establishments are informed by latest research.

All RICs have also evidenced increased engagement with a range of external partners and with other systems, to further strengthen regional learning supports and widen access for practitioners to other system networks and resources.

RIC Capacity and Resources

The use of data and evidence to evaluate, inform and shape RIC supports and the prioritisation of regional resources has been strongly evidenced. Evaluation informs all RIC programme levels, with a strong focus on structured evaluation, reflection and feedback from practitioners and other recipients of RIC supports.

RICs have also evidenced to this review and through the Scottish Government RIC funding process, that the funding provided by the Scottish Government to support RIC capacity and regional working has been fully and appropriately directed towards regional teams, plans and supports.

While RICs have evidenced increased engagement with and supports to practitioners and pupils since the previous RIC Review, further significant expansion of regional supports to the majority of pupils, practitioners and establishments would require further investment and/or the redeploying of additional resources.

Conclusions

Since their establishment, RICs have continued to strengthen their support to pupils and practitioners, deepen collaboration within their regions and across the system, and ensure that regional resources and supports are prioritised by robust evaluation of the needs of pupils and practitioners.

The evidence provided to this Review also demonstrates that RIC supports are evaluated strongly by participating practitioners, and that regional programmes and supports have continued to evolve in response to identified needs and circumstances, including current regional focus on absence, on strengthening support for learning, teaching and assessment, and on the provision of more cohort and session-long supports to deepen and embed learning for practitioners and pupils.

The evidence also suggests that, while those accessing regional resources remain a minority, RIC engagements and supports to pupils and practitioners have increased, and that further extending access would require additional investment and/or the redeploying of existing resources.

Part 1: Introduction

About this Review and Report

On 22nd June 2023, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced that there would be a rapid Review of the impact that Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) have had on supporting pupils and practitioners. This review was commissioned as part of the education reform programme, to further inform decisions on roles, responsibilities and relationships across the system in the delivery of educational improvement support.

To support the education reform programme and timeline, it was decided that this would be a 'rapid review' to deliver headline findings in October 2023. This review has therefore been undertaken by the Scottish Government, liaising with RICs, COSLA and Education Scotland. A review co-ordination group, comprising representation from Scottish Government, COSLA, ADES, Education Scotland and RICs was established to support the delivery of this review.

This report provides a summary of the detailed evidence captured in this review. This includes:

- a selection of evidence, information and examples from the RIC Evidence Returns, to support the review key themes and conclusions.

- a summary of key themes identified in the review interviews (with RIC Leads, Managers and Workstream/Programme officers) and focus group sessions (with school leaders, practitioners and other partners).

Context

About the Regional Improvement Collaboratives

In September 2017, Scottish Ministers and COSLA Leaders agreed to establish six RIC areas across Scotland, to strengthen collaborative working in the delivery of educational improvement support to children, young people and practitioners. Through the design and delivery of regional improvement plans, supported by collaborative networks, robust evaluation and feedback, RICs were established to:

- strengthen and focus collaborative improvement to ensure that educational improvement support is responsive to local, regional and national needs.

- reduce unnecessary duplication and ensure coherence between authorities and Education Scotland in the provision of professional learning, leadership support and guidance to schools, ELC settings and practitioners.

- provide a practical framework and capacity for the sharing of innovation and best practice between authorities, schools and practitioners.

The RICs involve between three and eight local authorities and each of Scotland's 32 authorities is a member of a RIC. The six RICs and their member authorities are:

- the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative - Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Stirling, and West Lothian Councils.

- the Northern Alliance - Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland, Moray, Orkney, and Shetland Islands Councils.

- the South East Improvement Collaborative – City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Fife, Midlothian, and Scottish Borders Councils.

- the South West Educational Improvement Collaborative - East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, and Dumfries and Galloway Councils.

- the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative – Angus, Dundee City, and Perth and Kinross Councils.

- the West Partnership - East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire Councils.

The RICs are not statutory bodies. They operate within the context of the statutory responsibilities for educational improvement that sit with each local authority. Each RIC has therefore developed its own internal governance arrangements and detailed programme in agreement with lead officers and elected members across their region. In accordance with the agreement between Scottish Ministers and COSLA Leaders, the strategic priorities of each RIC are supported by local, regional and national evidence. Further information on links between local, regional and national priorities are set out in Part 2 below.

Education Scotland

Through their Senior Regional Advisers (SRAs) and Regional Improvement Teams (RITs), which overlap with the RIC areas, Education Scotland works regularly with, and provides a range of support to, each RIC across the school year. While the detailed engagement between RICs and their Education Scotland RIT will differ across workstreams, programmes and RICs, a number of the RIC activities highlighted in this report will include support provided by Education Scotland.

Education Scotland also provide support to each RIC in the development of their regional plan/s, and in facilitating cross-RIC engagement. SRAs also sit on RIC Boards to further support partnership working between RICs and Education Scotland.

Education Reform

This review is of relevance to the reform of our national education bodies. A key aspect of those reforms is to ensure that our national bodes work coherently and responsively with schools, local government and other providers in delivering the best possible learning support and guidance to our pupils, schools and early years settings and practitioners.

National Support and Funding

The Scottish Government has provided additional funding to support regional capacity building, with the distribution linked to each RIC's improvement plan/s. Initially, Scottish Government funding to the RICs totalled around £5 million over the 2018/19 school year. During the pandemic, and at the start of the current Parliamentary term, arrangements moved to a financial year model (April-March), with a total of £6 million SG funding provided annually to the RICs since 2019/20.

When considering the reach and added value of RIC activity, it is important to reflect on how the £6 million annual funding provided by the Scottish Government compares to education spend in Scotland. For example, combined gross expenditure adjusted for Local Finance Returns (LFR) purposes on pre-school, school and community learning spending in Scotland was £6,863 million in 2021/22[2].

Evidence provided by RICs include examples of support provided to each stage of learning, and by that measure the dedicated funding to support RIC capacity and programmed activity equates to less than 0.1% of wider education spend.

Review method

This review involved the following elements.

Desktop review

A review of the findings of previous RIC reviews, policy statements and evaluations were undertaken as part of this Review. A summary of the key points from this exercise are set out in Part 2.

RIC Evidence Commission

The majority of new evidence considered under this review was provided by each RIC in response to an evidence commission based around the following four evaluation themes:

1. How does your RIC ensure that your improvement plan/s and annual report/s are driven by local contexts and local, regional and national priorities?

2. How do you know that the RIC professional learning and improvement offer meets needs, and leads to improvements in learning, teaching and assessment?

3. To what extent is your RIC working with partners to effectively and impactfully deepen learning across your region?

4. How is the funding from Scottish Government prioritised to support school leaders and practitioners?

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[2] Scottish local government finance statistics (SLGFS) 2021-22: workbooks - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

Each RIC was asked to provide an evaluative statement and supporting evidence under each of these themes, with a particular focus on articulating and evidencing the impact of regional working on pupils and practitioners.

Key themes, evidence and examples identified from the RIC returns to this commission, and the subsequent interviews held with each RIC (see below), are set out in the relevant sections of this report.

RIC Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

To further validate the evidence provided by each RIC, the Scottish Government met separately with each RIC – including RIC Leads, Managers and programme leads where appropriate - to discuss the range of evaluative responses and supporting evidence submitted to the Review. These discussions provided further background and, where appropriate and available, further evidence to support the Scottish Government's detailed consideration of the reach, responsiveness and impact of each RIC's regional plans and programmes.

This review also held three focus group discussions with individuals with previous experience of working with and/or being supported by a RIC. This enabled capture of their views on the impact and responsiveness of that support, validate where appropriate themes identified by RICs, share their wider perspectives on the visibility of and engagement in regional activities for their sector/s. It also invited their further views on how and where collaborative support could be strengthened further in the future.

The focus groups included:
- 11 school leaders
- 14 practitioners
- 4 local government officers
- 3 academics/university staff
- 5 Education Scotland officers
- 1 SDS officer
- 1 third sector representative

Views captured in these discussions are referenced in this report as being identified by 'focus group participants'. Individual comments from these discussions are not attributable and have been reported carefully to reduce the ability to identify the participant or RIC area being discussed.

Additional Submissions

As summarised in Part 3 of this Report, Unions representing teachers and school leaders were also invited to submit any information which may be relevant for consideration in this Review regarding their members' views and/or interactions with the RICs.

OECD Peer-Learning Activity

The OECD undertook a peer-learning visit to Scotland in May 2023 as part of the education reform programme. While the report and recommendations from that visit have still to be finalised and cannot therefore be included in this Report, a number of strengths relating to the development, position and further potential of the RICs were identified. Further information on that event will be published in due course.

Part 2: Reach and Impact on Pupils and Practitioners – Summary of RIC Evidence

Key Themes/Findings

- RICs have evidenced significant engagement with and support to practitioners across early years, primary, special and secondary settings.

- evidence indicates that engagement with practitioners and pupils has continued to expand since the previous review.

- while the number of staff engaged in regional activities at any time remains a minority, RICs supports have continued to increase with over 17,450 practitioner interactions and 638 school supports evidenced.

- the use of data and evidence, including self-evaluation from practitioners and other recipients to shape RIC support, has developed significantly since the previous review.

- practitioner evaluation of RIC programmes is consistently strong.

- RICs identified capacity and resources as a challenge to further expanding the reach and impact of regional working, and highlighted the year-to-year nature of funding support as a factor which has required management to deliver and extend their regional offer.

Introduction

This section summarises the main findings from the review returns and supporting evidence provided by each RIC. This was further supported/informed by individual meetings with each RIC.

In considering the evidence provided by each RIC and the findings highlighted in this section, it is important to note that RICs operate within a complex education system and – as highlighted elsewhere in this report and in previous reviews - it is not possible for the majority of RIC activities to robustly attribute or quantify their impact on practitioners or pupils. While a number of selected examples provided to this Review and referenced in Part 5 of this report do identify attainment data before and after regional interventions or support, the majority of 'impact' evidence provided by the RICs to this review is informed by practitioner feedback and evaluation, including in some instances external evaluation, supported by wider regional data on improvement trends.

The evidence provided to and considered in this Review has also been supported by significant developments in the evaluation and reporting frameworks, tools, drivers and progress measures which underpin the detailed work of each RIC. Examples of these arrangements are highlighted elsewhere in this report, including in Part 5, and can also be viewed in each RICs detailed review return and supporting evidence.

Some RICs have also highlighted the short timescales for this Review and confirmed that the latest evaluation reports for session 2022-23 were not all finalised or signed off by their respective Boards within the review timetable. A variety of evidence for the period since the last RIC Review has therefore been considered.

Evidence Summary and Conclusions

General points

All RICs have provided evidence on a wide range of engagement with and support to leaders and practitioners across early years, primary, special and secondary settings. The evidence submitted to the Review includes the sharing of information and best practice examples, the facilitation of staff networks, the on-line and in-person provision of leadership and pedagogical training, production and dissemination of guidance, toolkits and other resources, towards more bespoke, session-long collaboration and cohort-focussed programmes of support. These are further detailed in each RIC's review return/s, the supporting evidence provided and in the published materials that each RIC makes available to practitioners and other stakeholders.

While a majority of evidence provided to this review focuses on support provided directly to leaders and practitioners, each RIC has also provided evidence of support to and/or designed around the needs of pupils. In considering these examples it should be noted that RICs were established to provide improvement support to leaders and practitioners, and not directly to pupils.

All RICs have also evidenced through this review and through the Scottish Government funding process that the funding provided by the Scottish Government to support RIC capacity and regional working is appropriately and fully directed towards their regional teams, plans and activities.

Engagement with practitioners and pupils

Communication and awareness raising:

All RICs have evidenced a range of communication approaches to ensure that stakeholders, including schools, ELC establishments and CLD practitioners, can access the latest regional support resources and networks. Each RIC provides online access (via web/Glow/etc.) to a suite of improvement and evaluation tools, guidance, case studies, learning events and other regional resources and contact information, which each RIC promotes through the proactive publication and dissemination of, for example, newsletters, blogs, messages on X (previously known as Twitter) and other platforms/approaches, including existing local authority staff communications.

RICs have evidenced a significant expansion since the previous RIC Review in the use of focussed communication approaches across the above and other platforms. While the evidence provided to this review demonstrates increased numbers of practitioners engaging in regional programmes and thereby indicates increasing awareness of the RIC offer, it is recognised that many staff are not engaged in and are not aware of the support provided by their RIC.

While the proportion of staff engaged in and/or otherwise aware of their RIC cannot be robustly identified from the evidence provided, it seems reasonable to conclude from the overall school (638), leader and practitioner (17,466) interactions evidenced by each RIC, that around 30% of schools across Scotland engaged in RIC activity across the latest session for which evidence was provided. Further research would however be required to more robustly evidence that figure.

It is recognised that increasing awareness of, and encouraging further engagement in, RIC working requires a continued focus and further development. In this review, RICs have highlighted challenges in ensuring that as many practitioners as possible are aware of the regional support offer and how to access the resources provided. Additional points highlighted include:

- as noted elsewhere in this report, RICs highlighted that they do not currently have the capacity to interact directly with each and every establishment and/or practitioner or pupil across their region.

- it was also highlighted that the capacity of practitioners to proactively engage with/find out more about the work of their RIC was also a factor in further raising awareness.

- practitioners may not always be aware of the RIC role in the development of regionally designed or facilitated learning resources that may be cascaded to them by other routes.

Support to establishments and practitioners:

All RICs have evidenced a wide range of support to leaders and practitioners across early years, primary, special and secondary settings. These include:

- staff and specialist networks established in each region for leaders and practitioners to collaborate with their peers, build confidence, share knowledge and best practice, and to engage in further collaborative work within their subject or cohort:
  - all RICs have evidenced that membership of and engagement with professional networks in their region has expanded since the previous RIC Review, including in extending networks to wider groups of practitioners and/or to specialist groups.
  - there has also been evidence in some RICs of a shift towards self-sustaining networks, which determine their own workplans and timelines. This was also noted by focus group participants, who expressed a view that those networks still require a level of RIC support to ensure they remain active.

- professional learning opportunities, ranging from one-off in person or virtual events, to session-long cohorts. These include targeted supports and programmes to develop leadership skills, strengthen pedagogy, support confidence and consistency in assessment and moderation, and share and develop knowledge in aspects such as digital learning, pupil health and wellbeing, UNCRC and other specialist areas.

- the expansion of digital/virtual learning support and online resources. As evidenced in the last RIC Review, RICs pivoted to supporting digital/online and hybrid learning in responding to the COVID pandemic. While that demonstrated the agility of RICs and helped to further raise their profile within their regions and across the system, a theme from this review is how the use of digital resources have been significantly developed in each area. This is evidenced:
    - generally, across all RICs, in the expansion of online, guidance, toolkits, webinars, case studies and other virtual tools, recordings and learning/classroom resources which can be accessed remotely, often when is most convenient for the learner or practitioner.
    - through the expansion of online learning platforms to provide professional learning support to practitioners and/or to provide pupils with greater support in both the BGE and senior phase, including through learning platforms/resources such as: e-Sgoil, the @SWConnects, the Tayside Virtual Campus, and the West OS, which teachers from across the region also contribute to.

While it is not possible to uniquely identify and/or collate the total number of leaders and staff actively engaged in regional working, the evidence provided demonstrates significant numbers of leaders and practitioners engaging in these networks and programmes, with over 17,450 practitioner interactions and 638 school supports highlighted by RICs in their returns and supporting evidence. When compared to the evidence considered under previous RIC Reviews, this indicates a significant increase in the number of schools and staff involved in and supported by regional working.

With regards to the impact of RIC support to leaders and practitioners, each RIC has provided evidence on internal programme evaluations, including on feedback and self-evaluation from programme participants. Participant evaluation has been consistently strong across the RIC programmes where that information has been provided by participants and submitted to this Review, including in respect of the relevance of the RIC support provided and the positive impact on participants' knowledge, confidence and/or professional practice.

In further detailing these and other examples, both in their evidence returns and in direct discussion as part of this review, all RICs expressed the view that many of these programmes would not have been delivered without the additional capacity, structured approach and networks that their RIC provides. That view was also expressed in the focus group discussions with school leaders, practitioners and other partners.

Some RICs and focus group participants also expressed the view that RIC supports may bring particular added benefit to smaller, and potentially remote or rural, authorities, who may lack the capacity to deliver programmes at the scale or pace provided by their RIC.

Support to pupils:

The majority of evidence submitted to this review details RIC support to school and early years leaders and practitioners to strengthen improvement approaches and pedagogical practice in their school or early years settings. Each RIC has also however evidenced support which is more directly tailored to and/or focussed on wider issues and opportunities affecting children and young people. These include examples such as:

- online learning support for pupils, including the materials and virtual classes provided by the West Online School (previously referred to as West OS) and the online Advanced Higher (AH) offers provided through @SWConnects and the Tayside Virtual Campus.

- the Forth Valley & West Lothian initiative to raise attendance, which is being shared across RICs (see also Part 4 – Deepening Collaboration).

- a range of support relating to UNCRC, strengthening pupil voice, youth participation and engagement.

- a further range of tools, guidance materials and resources focussed on supporting learners in areas such as Health & Wellbeing, STEM and other subject support.

With regards to the reach and impact of these and other RIC activities engaging directly with pupils, information on pupils accessing the online Advanced Higher options and on the number of young people involved in some participation networks are included in the RIC examples set out in Part 5 of this report and in the more detailed evidence submitted to this Review. As previously stated, RICs were established primarily to enhance the improvement support that is provided to establishments and practitioners.

Data, Evidence and Evaluation:

While the collective impact of regional working cannot be expressed in terms of pupil attainment, all RICs have evidenced significant progress in their use of data, evidence and evaluation. Each RIC has evidenced robust approaches in the use of data, information and evaluation, to: inform their strategic priorities and programmes, more consistently evaluate and articulate the support provided to learning settings, pupils and practitioners, and to further review and refine their regional support offer.

The detailed approaches differ across the RICs, however the following developments in the use of data and evaluation have been observed:

- RICs have evidenced a strong focus in the use of evaluation and user reflection and feedback. This is most clearly evidenced though a range of examples from practitioners, school leaders and other recipients of support from each RIC, supporting both qualitative and quantitative analysis on the impact for their professional practice and, where available, on the observed impact for children and young people. The school and ELC-level feedback provided to this review has been consistently positive on the relevance and impact of regional programmes and support.

  RICs have also evidenced the use of toolkits and/or templates to support consistency in the systematic evaluation across programme levels. Some also evidenced 'You Said We Did' approaches to demonstrate to practitioners what actions were taken as a result of feedback and evaluation.

  The use of self-evaluation to inform individual learning needs within cohorts and to further refine regional programmes has also been strongly evidenced.

- RICs have evidenced the use of school and local authority/regional data, including data on attainment and pupil attendance, to inform regional priorities and/or progress. This is evidenced in different ways across the RICs, however all have highlighted the use of school and local authority improvement plans and inspection reports, as further evidence sources to ensure the relevance and responsiveness of RIC support to establishments. Many RICs have also evidenced the use of strategic and/or stretch aims, to support coherence across authorities and to ensure a regional focus on programmes which contribute to improved outcomes for learners.

- evaluation and analysis inform strategic decisions on programmes and resources. A number of RICs identified that analysis of user evaluations and needs-assessments from practitioners has informed a shift in many areas towards focussing regional resources more closely on pedagogical support for practitioners and support for assessment and moderation. In responding to those identified needs, many RICs have further refined and targeted their offer, for example in providing moderation support across different phases and groups, including for pupils with additional support needs and for moderation within and across establishments.

Regional Capacity and Funding

As outlined in Part 1 of this report, regional capacity is limited and the funding which has been provided by the Scottish Government to support RICs approximates to about 0.1% of education spend.

RICs commented that it is not reasonable in that context to expect current regional resources/teams to be able to reach all schools and early years establishments in their region, and that it was their view that the current RIC supports reflected good value for the funding provided. This view was also expressed by some focus group participants, including by the Robert Owen Centre in their external assessment of the West Partnership.

All RICs commented that, while many regional programmes were designed to be scalable and were being expanded where practicable, capacity and funding was a major barrier to further increasing RIC reach and impact. The impact of inflation on the ability to sustain and/or expand current levels of activity was also highlighted, as was the year-to-year approach to funding, which limits longer term planning.

Part 3: Desktop Review, Focus Groups and Additional Submissions

Key Themes

- since their establishment, RICs have continued to deepen collaboration across local authorities and other partners, and increase their reach to practitioners.

- while the majority of schools have not engaged in and may not be aware of the support provided by their RIC, evidence provided to this Review demonstrates significant further progress and development since 2021.

- where practitioners are involved in RIC activities, evaluative feedback is strong.

- to further extend the impact of collaborative working, greater clarity is needed on local, regional and national roles and responsibilities in the provision of educational improvement support.

Introduction

While the majority of new information and evidence considered in this Review was provided by each RIC in their review submissions and supporting evidence, this section summarises the findings of the Desktop Review, Focus Group Discussions and additional submissions which were invited from and submitted by teaching and staff unions and representatives.

Desktop Review

A review of previously published material was undertaken as part of this Review, by the Education Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Government. This included national policy statements on the establishment of the RICs, external reports and/or evaluations referencing the collaboratives, and two previous external reviews of the RICs undertaken by Research Scotland and published in February 2019 and December 2021.

Selected findings from the desktop review of published materials included the following (regarding the reach and impact of RICs):

- the second RIC review, published in December 2021:
    - noted that it was found that difficult to discern, from attainment data, the exact impact of RICs on educational improvement.
    - reported that there was a high level of confidence among regional and national stakeholders in RIC structures, governance, decision making and leadership arrangements, with increased collaboration reported across all local authorities.

- o reported views that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had encouraged more collaboration between schools and local authorities resulting in strong relationships and increased support for RICs – the rapid expansion of the use of digital communication technologies during COVID was also recognised as a driver for increased collaboration within each region.

- o found examples of the RICs collaborating across regions, including collaborating on resources for pupils with additional support needs, e-learning and assessment and moderation. It was also noted that, through performing a range of roles at both regional and national level, Education Scotland played an important role in sharing approaches across the RICs and in co-ordinating national practice.

- o found that found that RICs provided a wide range of learning opportunities for school staff, including through professional learning and leadership development, pedagogical and digital learning support, staff networks and leadership support.

- o suggested that awareness of the RICs increased when staff were involved in RIC activities, but also noted that there remained challenges to raising awareness with schools and staff.

- o found that RICs were aligning regional priorities with the National Improvement Framework (NIF), with school improvement plans and other local authority plans, and that the NIF appeared to have the greatest influence over priorities.

- o found that RICs were able to demonstrate progress with regional activities, demand and the profile of participants and schools engaging in those activities, but that due to the other system interventions and inputs running concurrently, it was extremely challenging to quantify the scale of the direct RIC impact, particularly the impact on/for pupils.

- o recognised that RICs were still in their infancy and that collaborative working would take time to develop.

- the review Professor Ken Muir's report *Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education*, published in March 2022:
  - o challenged the second RIC Review's positive assessment of support for the RICs and noted that practitioners felt that the work of the RICs had yet to have meaningful impact.

  - o reiterated the need to raise awareness and extend the visibility of the RICs and make sure that people at all levels in the education system, particularly class teachers and support staff, understand the role of the RICs.

A key observation that this Review has made when considering the Desktop review, is the significant progress that has been made and evidenced by each RIC in the period since the previous RIC Review reported in December 2021. As the evidence examples referenced in this report demonstrate, since 2021 RICs have evidenced significant developments in:

- focusing and substantively extending their support offer to increased numbers of practitioners and leaders.

- further deepening collaboration and engagement between authorities across RICs and with other partners.

- the robust use of data, evidence and evaluation to strengthen the supports provided to establishments and practitioners, and to focus the efforts of partners in supporting improvement.

Focus Group Discussions and Additional Submissions

Focus Group Discussions

As outlined in Part 1 of this report, three focus group discussions were held as part of this review, involving a total of 39 individuals with previous experience of working with and/or being supported by a RIC.

Participants provided their views on the understanding that any comments shared or highlighted in this report would not be attributable. This report does not therefore refer to or quote directly focus group comments on specific RIC workstreams or programmes but seeks instead to reflect the common themes raised in those discussions.

Focus Group Themes:

In general, focus group attendees across each of the participant groups, RICs and sectors were:

- positive on the added value provided to pupils and practitioners, in relation to the RIC activities they had experience of:
    - o these views were mainly expressed as professional judgements, however, it was also highlighted that the data supports that conclusion (including reference to RIC examples referenced elsewhere in this report).
    - o some participants expressed the view that RICs had added significant value in the programmes they had experienced.

- very positive about their personal and professional experience with their RIC, including the benefits for their own professional practice and development (where applicable) and on the creation of both formal and informal professional networks.

- positive around the use of knowledge, data and evaluation in shaping and ensuring the responsiveness of RIC support, including knowledge of the regional and local contexts, key data measures and programme evaluations from practitioners:

- o increased visibility in supporting self-evaluation and reflection by practitioners was identified by some participants as a particular strength.

- very positive around the use of research, the sharing of latest pedagogy and practice examples, including across and between authorities which was not routinely supported before the RICs:
    - o research on moderation and latest pedagogy were highlighted as particular RIC strengths and areas for further expansion.

- positive on the continued maturing and deepening of collaboration within RICs and with partners, including:
    - o strengthened collaboration between Local Authorities, including between system leaders, and through school leaders and practitioners collaborating with colleagues in other authorities.
    - o continued development of relationships and shared delivery with Education Scotland, Universities, Colleges, Third Sector and other partners.

- very positive on the added value for practitioners of sharing professional knowledge, skills and confidence through RIC staff workshops, events and specialist networks:
    - o the value of practitioner-led networks, supporting teacher agency and empowerment without excess bureaucracy, was also highlighted as a particular strength by some participants.
    - o the central role of local authority staff within each RIC and in leading/supporting programmes was also identified by a number of participants as a positive factor in securing buy-in and increasing traction with practitioners.
    - o the option to collaborate at different levels and scales, e.g., through RIC networks, schools or professional clusters/families etc., and for structured feedback was identified by some as particular benefits of RIC network approaches.
    - o it was also suggested however that the move towards self-sustaining networks in some/many RIC areas would still require support.

- very positive on the expansion and flexibility of online professional learning, case studies and other virtual/online resources facilitated by the RICs:
    - o the region-wide availability of focussed resources to support improvements to learning teaching and assessment, and online platforms/resources for learners, were identified by some participants as significant developments in providing greater equity of access, particularly in remote and/or rural areas.
    - o it was also however highlighted that face-to-face support and interaction remained important in certain circumstances and a number of participants recommended a hybrid approach going forwards.

Participants from some sectors also highlighted the following:

- some expressed a view that programmes they were involved in, including professional learning, would be unlikely to be available for some authorities in that region without the governance, capacity and regional focus provided by the RIC:
    - o the value of senior leaders coming together across local government and other partners was identified as a strength of the RICs and as a vehicle to developing and maintaining a shared understanding and collective focus/workplan across larger areas.
    - o this included some programmes initially developed as pilots within schools and then rolled out to scale across a RIC.
    - o some noted that in addition to supporting greater equity and quality of support, coming together under a collective regional offer has also reduced local authority duplication in some areas.

- a number of participants commented on a 'cluttered landscape' and suggested a need for greater clarity in respect of system roles for the provision of learning support to pupils and practitioners.
    - o some suggested that such clarity could further strengthen the reach and impact of regional working and reduce the turnover of regional staff/secondments.

- some participants suggested a need for further work to streamline support communications to schools/practitioners – to minimise overlap and provide clarity across national, regional and local support offers.

- some participants highlighted the importance in bringing positive challenge to their RIC from external partners – this was identified as a strength in some current arrangements.

Additional Submissions:

Unions representing teachers and school leaders were also invited to submit their views and any information they could share on members' views and/or interactions with the RICs, which may be relevant for consideration in this Review. As with the focus group discussions, the information presented below is not attributed to any individual organisation or member and reflects the themes captured through these submissions.

Unions representing teachers and school leaders highlighted the following:

- while some positive examples of RICs were demonstrated, all indicated that the majority of their members (school leaders and teachers) had limited or no contact with their RIC:
    - o many commented that the majority of members had little or no knowledge of the support provided by their RIC.

- o some commented that RIC activity and decision making, including in the design of RIC plans and in considering the workload impact, is too far removed from teachers.
- o some commented directly that there was limited evidence on the positive impact of RICs for members.

- some commented that there remained confusion and overlap between the roles and support provided by the RICs, by local authorities and by Education Scotland, which included:
  - o one commented that there was potential for overlap/conflict between national and regional levels, including between regional professional learning support and the National E-Learning Offer.
  - o one commented that there remained a reluctance for some local authorities to fully engage with and share resources through their RIC, and thereby to minimise overlap and maximise the impact for schools.
  - o one commented that information for staff in relation to areas of the curriculum, particularly where sensitivities exist, should be provided consistently and in a timely fashion across the country.

- some expressed the view that there was inconsistency of offer and variability of approach between the RICs:
  - o some commented that the benefits which some RICs have brought have not been universally seen in other areas.
  - o one noted the difference in geographic coverage between the RICs.
  - o one commented that the rigour and approach of RICs was also variable.

- further comments expressed by single respondents also included:
  - o one commented that RICs do not follow the 'meso-level' approach and that RIC plans/activities can be perceived as top-down, with limited buy-in and understanding of the regional vision at school level.
  - o one commented that there has not been meaningful engagement with the professional associations on regional approaches which impact on the quality of learning and teaching and/or have potential to impact on terms and conditions of service.
  - o one commented that tensions between the Scottish Government and COSLA on RIC funding were limiting the potential RIC impact.
  - o one commented that RIC funding could be directed through the individual member authorities to focus on local initiatives/support.

Conclusions

RIC Reach and Visibility

The evidence summarised in this section presents a mixed picture. The views of those directly involved in RIC activities, as evidenced in previous RIC Reviews and in the focus group sessions for this Review, are supportive of the added value provided by those initiatives. However, the additional submissions and the findings of previous reviews suggest that RIC activities are not perceived as reaching or involving the majority of schools, and both visibility of and engagement in those activities has been variable.

It should be noted that this evidence has not been triangulated and in many cases was presented as the views/positions of individuals and/or organisations. Further research would be required to robustly assess the level of practitioner awareness of and engagement in RIC activities.

RIC Development and Evolution

The desktop review, in particular the findings of the two previous RIC Reviews, does suggest a continued evolution of the RICs over time, with an evidenced increase of the scale and reach of regional activities and in cross-authority collaboration between the first and second RIC Review. This was evidenced particularly in response to the Covid pandemic and the development of online platforms and resources, and also through increased local authority confidence and buy-in to the regional governance and strategic planning arrangements.

The new information provided by RICs to this Review has also evidenced a further and continued increase in the number of pupils, practitioners and school/ELC leaders involved in RIC programmes.

Clarity

A theme from both the focus group discussions and additional submissions is the call for greater clarity on the roles, responsibilities and relationships of different system levels in the provision of improvement support to schools and ELC establishments, particularly between local authorities, RICs and national bodies.

Impact

Focus group participants highlighted many positive impacts on their professional practice, knowledge and confidence as a result of their involvement in RIC activities. While the focus group discussions and elements of the desktop review include strong support for regional working from practitioners and leaders, and while improved outcomes can be more directly linked to some school and cohort-focussed activities, all recognise that, similar to other system inputs, it is difficult to quantify the overall impact of regional working.

Part 4: Partnership working – RIC governance and deepening collaboration with system partners

Key Themes

- RICs have evidenced strengthened engagement and support for regional working across and between local authorities.

- cross-RIC collaboration is expanding support across regional boundaries.

- RICs have evidenced expanding relationships with other partners, including with academia and other systems.

Introduction

This section summarises additional evidence provided to this Review on how RICs have sought to deepen collaboration and strengthen partnership working within RICs and with system partners.

This section does not provide information relating directly to the central focus of this Review, to capture evidence on the impact of RICs on pupils and practitioners. Rather, the purpose of this section is to highlight aspects of evolving partnership working which demonstrate the ongoing development of RICs as delivery partners within and across the system, and/or to highlight aspects of partnership working which have strengthened the approach and/or profile of each RIC.

RIC Governance – Local Authority Partnership Working

Building on the partnership arrangements outlined in previous RIC Reviews, evidence provided to this Review demonstrates that RIC governance structures and relationships have continued to mature and are more deeply embedded across local government. While the detailed arrangements in each RIC differ, a number of key findings have emerged. These include:

- strengthened governance and planning arrangements, supporting collective vision and focus across member authorities within RICs. This has been evidenced through and is supported by:
  - evidence of increased maturity in governance structures in providing strategic oversight and collective decision-making. This includes, for example the setting of strategic vision and the use of improvement drivers, and critical indicators to focus the work of the West Partnership.
  - evidence of project management tools and approaches in the governance of RIC programmes, with progress monitoring and reporting across programme levels. A programme based, data driven approach was evidenced by all RICs in evaluating and reporting on progress.

- o evidence of increased visibility of practitioner and other voices in RIC governance arrangements and plans. All RICs evidenced engagement with leaders, practitioners and other stakeholders in the design of their regional plans and programmes. Many also evidenced the involvement of youth, Early Years and/or school representation within their regional governance structures and partnership boards.

- o strengthened staffing relationships between RIC teams, programme leads and member authorities across all RIC areas. For example, this was evidenced through the Link Officer approach developed by the Northern Alliance, whereby NA officers are linked with an authority to deepen collaboration and support coherence, and through the South East Improvement Collaborative's new staffing model to support the involvement of authority staff in regional working as part of authorities' strategic remits.

Collaboration between RICs

Another aspect evidenced in this Review is both increased co-production and the greater sharing of regional initiatives across and between RICs. This has been demonstrated through regular engagement between RIC Leads and Managers, to share learning, co-construct approaches and discuss developments. Collective discussions across the RICs have further been supported by the ADES Professional Development Officer and by Education Scotland, with many examples of cross-RIC working also involving Education Scotland staff. RICs have also highlighted that workstream leads are more regularly engaging with their counterparts in other RICs, to share developments within subject and sector programmes.

Examples of cross-RIC collaboration include:

- the Forth Valley & West Lothian interactive attendance guide has been shared with Headteachers, senior officers and Educational Psychologists in the West Partnership, South East, South West and Tayside RICs, the attendance focus model has also been presented to Directors in the Northern Alliance.

- the West Partnership Assessment & Moderation Toolkit has been launched and made available across all RICs and will shortly be loaded onto the national moderation hub.

- the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative made their online teacher tool available across all RIC areas last school session.

- the Forth Valley & West Lothian Collaborative and the Northern Alliance have collaborated in their numeracy programmes.

- the West Partnership OS resource is open to all pupils and parents across Scotland.

- in response to requests from secondary schools to help them support learners with barriers to learning, The Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative and the Forth Valley & West Lothian Regional Improvement collaborative have collaborated to develop and collate National 1 – National 3 resources for learners in the Senior Phase in all STEM subject areas.

- the Northern Alliance and the South East Improvement Collaborative have collaborated on the Data for Improvement Project, looking at support for educators using data more effectively to plan for improvement and also aiming to provide practitioners with access to the right data, at the right level and in the right way, so they can apply the most appropriate interventions for every child.

- the Northern Alliance developed a Regional Collaboration Framework, which was shared with the other RICs. SWEIC have made use of this framework within their developments to measure the progress and impact of aspects of collaboration.

- RIC Leads and Managers across RICs are collaborating to develop a RIC self-evaluation framework to build a shared understanding and expectations around the role of RICs regionally and their associated impact.

- further collective discussions and contributions across all RICs when engaging in national level events and reports, including in presenting to the OECD in their May visit to Scotland as part of the education reform programme, and in responding to consultations such as the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment (Hayward Review).

In summary, each RIC is leading and/or collaborating on improvement activity which is being shared with other RIC areas as exemplars of effective, impactful approaches. Only limited cross-RIC collaboration was evidenced in previous reviews, and this indicates the further development and progress of RICs as part of the Scottish education system, both within each RIC area and collectively as a framework to systemically develop and share innovation and best practice.

Partnership Working with other Partners and Systems

Collaboration with National Bodies and Scottish Government

While RICs noted variance in their detailed interaction/s with Education Scotland and highlighted a lack of clarity and consistency on the regional roles, responsibilities and contribution of our national education bodies, RICs evidenced examples of positive engagement with Education Scotland, including with Senior Regional Advisers and their teams supporting regional programmes and workstreams.

Longer term financial and staff planning was also highlighted as a challenge by each RIC, with current annual funding rounds identified as a potential barrier to building on and further developing their reach and impact. Many also noted that pressures on funding have been exacerbated by recent financial challenges and rising staff costs.

To date, the Scottish Government has provided grant funding to the RICs, with funding support being confirmed on a year-by-year basis. RICs commented that this has impacted on their ability to plan strategically, for multi-year programmes where further value and impact could be pursued. They also commented that the funding process was bureaucratic and unresponsive, and that the short-term nature of funding support impacts on the recruitment and retention of staff seconded from member authorities to lead on regional work. The maximum length of secondments was also highlighted by some RICs as a challenge to developing sustainable programmes of support delivered over time.

Collaboration with research and academia

RICs are evidencing further and deeper engagement with educational academics and consultants, to support the design and delivery of specific programmes and approaches, and in the use of evidence and evaluation, including external evaluation, to assess, triangulate and further refine the support their RIC provides.

Selected examples on RIC engagement with research and academia include (further examples in the use of research have been evidenced by RICs in this Review):

- to support the Forth Valley & West Lothian Collaborative STEM workstream, officers from Forth Valley College have worked with practitioners in schools and have provided further resources to support STEM delivery in classrooms. This workstreams also involves Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) representatives, to further promote and support this learning offer and explore where partnership working can be further developed in this area.

- the Northern Alliance has worked with:
  - Michael Fullan Professor Emeritus, OISE/University of Toronto, to support practitioners and learners across the region in exploring Professor Fullan's 'Right Drivers for Whole System Success' – a set of research-based drivers to support a system-wide focus on building collective responsibility for wellbeing and learning.

- - the Data for Children's Collaborative (with UNICEF), which included academics from the University of Strathclyde's Fraser of Allander Institute and Glasgow Caledonian University's Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit.

  - the University of Aberdeen to carry out research on 'Shared Headships', resulting in a report which is being shared nationally.

  - Professor John McKendrick from Glasgow Caledonian University to understand the impact of breakfast provision on outcomes for secondary school learners.

  - during the pandemic, with Emeritus Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop, University of Strathclyde to advise the Alliance on developing guidance and professional learning for effective transitions across early years, primary and secondary.

- the South East Improvement Collaborative Board includes representatives from Education Scotland, Edinburgh University, Community Learning and Development and Skills Development Scotland, in addition to Director and headteacher representation from each of the five member authorities. The University of Edinburgh has worked in close partnership with SEIC over a number of years, to develop and deliver supports to SEIC Research Schools, helping school teams engage in supported research and to deliver improvement and enhance outcomes for children and young people. University of Edinburgh colleagues are also partner members of many of the SEIC Networks.

- to further deepen collaboration and support coherence across the system, the South West Education Improvement Collaborative is establishing a Delivery Support Group, to both advise on and support delivery of the regional plan. This group will include representation from: SWEIC Clusters, Third Sector Partners, FE & HE Academic Research and Professional Learning Professionals, Curriculum Networks, Education Scotland Regional Improvement Team, Business/Commerce Partners, Education Sector Networks, Schools' Improvement Network, Global Partners, Local Authority Officers, Practitioners, Headteacher Innovation Group.

- as outlined in Part 5, the West Partnership has an established relationship with the Robert Owen Centre, (ROC, University of Glasgow), who provide: Professorial support and challenge as members of the RIC Board, practical support for leaders and teachers undertaking collaborative action research activities, and through annual external evaluations on the progress and impact of the West Partnership.

- the West Partnership has also engaged with and/or referenced latest research within their workstreams, including:

  - Professor Mark Priestly and Dr Valerie Drew from the University of Stirling's programme on *School Based Curriculum Development through Critical Collaborative Professional Enquiry* for depute headteachers.

- with Glasgow Caledonian University for inputs in the *Delivering Mentorship* and in the *Improving Our Classrooms* programme.
- with Professor Emeritus at Strathclyde University Aline-Wendy Dunlop, who advises the WP reference group for a longitudinal study on the impact of 1140 hours of funded ELC across the region.
- in taking account of recent research and guidance including educational consultant Lucy Crehan's work on curriculum design and Dr Simon Breakspear's *Teaching Spirits* as a foundation for pedagogy partnership work this session.

Collaboration with external partners and other systems

In addition to the above, RICs have also evidenced increased engagement with a range of external partners since the last RIC Review. This includes through their regional partnership boards and in the design and delivery of selected workstreams, for example with leadership consultants, Third Sector and/or other external partners.

Some RICs have also evidenced engagement with other education systems, including access to wider partnerships and/or events for staff, and the further sharing of regional approaches with other systems.

Examples evidenced by RICs in this review include:

- as noted in Part 5, the Northern Alliance has facilitated access for 6,313 practitioners to register for the World Education Summit live event and legacy resources, which equates to over 60% of the teaching population of the Northern Alliance. The NA has also been working in partnership with The Promise Scotland as part of a project to improve outcomes for Care Experienced Learners using data for improvement.

- from 2022, the South East Improvement Collaborative have entered into new Tri-Nations Collaborative arrangements with education colleagues in the Education Authority of Northern Ireland and Central South Wales Consortium. This involves the sharing of context, practice and approaches relating to themes including: digital technologies to enhance learning, support provisions for the most vulnerable learners, approaches to tackling the poverty related attainment gap, and approaches to quality improvement. This cross-nation collaboration has gone on to support investment in professional learning for regional and central teams and also the establishment of the first Scottish cohort of the Association of Education Advisers.

- practitioners from the SWEIC programmes for *Curriculum Innovation* and *Learning, Teaching and Assessment* are taking part on the global partnership New Pedagogies for Deep Learning. They will attend their virtual Foundation Capacity Building Institute 2-day training programme with the intention of sharing this approach to deepen learning across the SWEIC and into participating schools. Through the *OECD Schools'+ Network*, the SWEIC is also aiming to put forward a South West Network as possible members to participate in the *Schools' Learning Circle*.

- in addition to local authority Directors and Heads of Service for education, and workstream lead officers, the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative TRIC Leadership group also includes representatives from NHS Tayside and Police Scotland. This has shaped and informed the particular approach of the TRIC.

Conclusions

RICs have evidenced continued focus and progress in strengthening collaboration with and across partners. Collaboration between local authorities within each RIC continues to deepen, with evidence of firmly embedded governance and reporting structures providing strategic oversight and accountability and strengthening buy-in across local authority members. Collective understanding, coherence and a shared regional vision across member authorities is further supported through clearer links between RIC teams and member authorities, the use of strategic aims, measures and drivers to support coherence between local, regional and national priorities and supports, and strong programme management, evaluation and reporting arrangements across all programme levels.

As RICs have continued to mature, cross-RIC working has also evolved and expanded, with each RIC collaborating across a range of initiatives, to share learning across the system, including supports for pupils and practitioners.

RICs have evidenced broad engagement with research and academia, to inform their improvement approaches and models, strengthen the evaluation of regional support impacts, and ensure that design and delivery of pedagogical and other supports to practitioners and establishments are informed by latest research.

RICs have also evidenced increased engagement with a range of external partners and with other systems, to further strengthen regional learning supports and widen access for practitioners to other system networks and resources.

Part 5: RIC Evidence Examples of Reach and Impact

Introduction

This section includes examples of RIC programmes, workstreams and approaches which have been selected from the returns and supporting evidence submitted by each RIC to this review. These examples have been chosen to provide a snapshot of the range of initiatives and approaches within each region to maximise their impact on, and engagement with, pupils and practitioners.

Priority has been given to examples which include data on the reach of individual programmes and, where provided, the impact, evaluation and/or feedback.

The examples in this section cover a range of timelines and do not reflect the entirety of support currently or previously provided by each RIC, which will be further enhanced through additional programmes, events, resources, interactions and other exchanges not included in the figures below. Further information on these and other examples of RIC activity, engagement, evaluation and governance are set out in their individual review returns and supporting evidence.

Conclusions drawn from these examples and the other evidence considered in the Review are provided in the sections above.

Each RIC's evidence examples begin on a new page.

Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative (FVWLC)

Evidence provided by the FVWLC to this review include the following examples:

- based on evidence-based discussion, including interaction with academics involved in studies into the link between attendance, attainment and life chances, FVWLC decided that for session 22-23 targeted work to improve attendance would be prioritised across the RIC area. Engagement with school leaders and practitioners was central, including an Attendance Symposium in March 2023, which was attended by 400 participants. This has continued to be built upon in the current session, producing a range of resources for practitioners.

  This FVWLC initiative has evidenced positive impacts on pupil attendance across the member authorities. For example, RIC staff worked directly with authorities and around 70 individual schools from Dec 2022, Schools who received RIC intensive support improved attendance over an academic year by 3.6%, 1.8% more than those schools who did not receive direct support. This initiative has been identified as an exemplar and is currently being shared with other RIC areas.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 3206 Practitioners across the region directly accessed CLPL opportunities or programmes which, practitioner feedback indicated had impacted positively on practitioner knowledge, skills and pedagogy.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 1350 Practitioners, with a focus on primary practitioners, were supported by the RIC 'Change Hubs' to collaborate, develop practice and pedagogy, and identify their CLPL needs. Secondary subject Hubs were also launched in session 23-24.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 285 Practitioners, with a focus on secondary practitioners, attended a series of Futureproofing Pedagogy seminars, which received positive evaluations form participants.

- the online Inspiration Hub contains 83 Developing Practice Examples designed by practitioners to support colleagues to develop collaboration, improve pedagogy and improve the learning experience for children and young people. This resource is forecast to rise to 250 examples.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, as part of the FVWLC Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer (QAMSO) training programme, over 250 practitioners and school leaders participated in a programme to develop a better understanding of standards, share good practice and support effective assessment and moderation.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 432 Practitioners were directly supported by the FVWL Numeracy Workstream. Evaluations of this workstream show that support has impacted significantly on learners, practitioners and establishments. The numeracy for learners with severe and complex needs programme was also a catalyst for the formation of an Additional Support Needs Network to support practitioners, and 47 Practitioners attended four sessions to share practical ideas on how to make learning in numeracy and maths relevant for learners with severe and complex needs, with positive feedback from practitioners on the impact for them and their learners.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, as part of the FVWLC Literacy programme, 859 Practtioners accessed universal support opportunities, while a further 325 Practitioners were involved in targeted support interventions. This programme included a range of focussed events, information resources and the sharing of learning/collaboration across the RIC area, including twilight sessions for over 100 Support for Learning Assistants. Participant evaluation and feedback across the programme elements and events was very positive.

- the FVWLC established a Youth Voice Framework, constructed with the views of 650 children and young people and assembled by representatives from each of the youth voice structures within the local authorities. This provides practitioners across the RIC with practical resources, co-designed by CLD and education staff and supported by youth participation, to implement the principles of the UNCRC charter and support the youth voice within establishments across the region.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, as part of the FVWLC Data Coaches programme, a data champion has been trained in each of Stirling's primary and secondary schools, 46 Practitioners in Clackmannanshire have been supported to effectively use SNSA data to support improvement in the classroom, all primary practitioners in Falkirk have been supported to Improve the use of data across all levels of the system, and 41 Practitioners in West Lothian have been directly supported to develop data literacy through the implementation and exploration of 'agile' classroom practices.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, as part of the FVWLC Embedding a Play Pedagogy and Learner-led approach in Primary 1 and Beyond programme: 102 Practitioners participated in an event to share learning on the use of Falkirk Council's Model for Play Pedagogy, 99 Practitioners participated in an event to share learning on re-inventing the school experience for Primary 2 learners, with a focus on outdoor learning, 41 Practitioners participated in an event to share learning on the use of technology within a play-based learning approach, 41 Practitioners also participated in each of 2 further events to share examples of good practice. Feedback from practitioners who completed evaluations was strong across all of these programme events/aspects.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, the views of 326 staff across the FVWL region informed the development of a Health & Wellbeing workstream, including the establishment of a dedicated resource to support staff in getting the information that they need to address pupils and their own health and wellbeing issues.

- a key focus of the FVWLC is to support Local Authorities in achieving the stretch aims they identified as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, through its collaborative networks. A single stretch aim was agreed by the four member authorities, to further focus and ensure coherence and responsiveness of the RIC offer.

Northern Alliance (NA)

Evidence provided by the NA to this review include the following examples:

- throughout the 2022-23 school session, the Alliance engaged in 715 collaborative engagements with 5,918 practitioners, including information/resource sharing and informal discussion, more formal planning and joint work, and development of practice through collaborative enquiry. Further information on some of those engagements is included below.

- 1,010 practitioners attended professional learning events or series delivered by the RIC in the 22-23 session.

- by May 2023, 3,497 practitioners had engaged in collaborative engagements to explore existing and new pedagogies and practices.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, a cohort of 57 head teachers were supported to build collective responsibility for whole system success.

- the Alliance continues to support a range of professional networks to facilitate peer support, share knowledge and innovation and deepen collaboration between practitioners across the region, including for example:
    - 27 Subject Support Groups, involving 1,141 practitioners who meet regularly and enhance existing local authority staff groups.
    - the Early Years Network, which has facilitated learning sessions for 193 ELC practitioners from all member authorities.
    - the Head Teacher Leadership of Change Network, comprising 146 Head Teachers across all member authorities plus 30 Evolving Systems Thinking alumni, the Shared Headship Network.
    - the Small Schools Network, the Armed Forces Educators Network, the Network of School Leaders with responsibility for Child Protection and Additional Support Needs.
    - 47 active Teams in Glow, with over 4,000 members. 4,482 staff are also subscribed to the Alliance newsletter, containing the latest information on RIC resources and events.

- by the end of the 2022-23 session, 4 of the 7 member authorities had hosted Wellbeing and Learning 'TeachMeets', where 278 practitioners have come together to share and mobilising effective practice across the RIC, with practitioners presenting and sharing information on approaches that work in the classroom.

- 6,313 practitioners have registered for access to the World Education Summit live event and legacy resources, facilitated by the Alliance.

- 50 ELC practitioners are registered to participate in Cohort 2 of the Play Pedagogy Collaborative Enquiry Model, to support ELC practitioners throughout the collaborative enquiry process.

- in addition to the learning engagements and networks above, effective practice is also captured and cascaded across the NA region, through the dissemination of case studies. To date, 50 case studies have been shared and mobilised online.

- the NA Youth Participation Network and Youth Advisory Group involves young people who represent their peers in each member authority area and is supported by CLD staff from all 8 member authority areas, to secure participation and strong voice for/from young people across the region. All member councils have put in place structures to support youth participation, and this programme has led to a scaling up of the Breakfast Provision/Youth CCITI Model in the region and to the initiation of work to create an Equalities Policy Guide to support the development and/or review of equalities related policies for learning settings.

- the NA *Improving Outcomes in Fractions project* demonstrated significant progress for each pupil involved in a primary school case study to demonstrate the efficacy of the project approach and resources, where 79% of pupils had a greater percentage score at the end of the project and 64% of pupils more than doubled their entry score. These and other case study resources are made available to practitioners across the region.

- to support coherence in the collective improvement across the region, the Alliance hosted 70 local authority staff with responsibility for school improvement, to provide a shared understanding of the key features of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment, and effective processes to support quality assurance.

- the NA has undertaken detailed engagement with authorities and staff across the region to ensure that the regional offer is aligned with local and authority priorities. This includes, in one authority as example, 150 Argyll & Bute staff attending professional learning sessions in 22-23 and 526 staff registered and accessing in World Education Summit materials facilitated through the RIC. Within Argyll & Bute, 350 staff are currently engaging with one or more of the 47 NA practitioner networks. Similar engagement is undertaken within authorities across the region, to support awareness of an engagement in RIC programmes, resources and learning opportunities.

- to ensure meaningful engagement and capture the issues schools, settings and teams across the region most wanted to collaborate on as part of their RIC, the Alliance met with Head Teachers from every local authority, children and young people, network members, CLD practitioners, ELC practitioners and others across the region, including online options and a session in Gaelic for GME practitioners. In addition, they provided an option to engage online, which attracted a small number of parents. In total, 475 people engaged with this process, which provided over 1,400 pieces of information to analyse and inform the work of the RIC.

- following evaluation of the progress and impact of the first year of their current Plan, the NA decided to focus its activity on learning, teaching and assessment, using a logic model and three core outcome measures to capture progress and impact on learners. This approach was developed in response to an identified need for clearer evidence on the impact of collaboration on learning, teaching and assessment.

Further evaluation of NA workstreams are set out in their annual impact plans, which were provided as supplementary evidence for this review. Those include positive feedback on the qualitative impact for practitioners and learners. For example, practitioner evaluations on engagements from September 2022-early July 2023 found that: 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that NA professional learning increased their understanding, and 91% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would be able to apply the learning to their own context.

South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC)

Evidence provided by the SEIC to this review include the following examples:

- during the current session to date, 182 schools and early years settings across the region have been involved in the main SEIC supports programmes (further information for some of these are outlined below). To put that in context, there are 407 schools in the South East, all of whom can also benefit from some SEIC universal supports including SEIC funded licences for the World education Summit research materials.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 288 practitioners across the region - from ELC, primary and secondary settings - were supported as part of Cohort 4 of the SEIC Research Schools/ELCs Programme. The range of support included professional learning in practitioner enquiry, engaging with research, partnership working, including with the University of Edinburgh and Education Scotland, and bespoke learning sessions for individual establishments. 94% agreed or strongly agreed that the content had been relevant, and 84% agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge had increased or improved.

- a cohort of 53 headteachers/ELC managers were supported to connect across the 2023-24 session through the HT Trios programme, which supports collaboration, critical reflection, training and other bespoke guidance and materials to support the cohort in making positive change in their settings.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 1,078 practitioners across the SEIC signed-up for a series of Pedagogy Pioneer sessions, created and delivered by 12 'Pedagogy Pioneers' involving the sharing of practice with colleagues across the region, to support system wide improvement.

- through the SEIC Digital Connector Programme, 20 schools across the region received bespoke support, for the whole session, to improve their use of digital technologies to enhance learning, including the provision of 1-1 support and regular professional learning for staff. As a result of this support, all schools in this cohort are expected to submit evidence to achieve the Digital Schools Award Scotland by the end of 2023.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 20 schools across the region received bespoke support for the whole session, to raise attainment in literacy from the SEIC Raising Attainment in Literacy Connector Programme. Informed by school-based audits, bespoke professional learning and support was provided, supported by 1-1 improvement discussions and school visits. All participants were able to reference positive impact from involvement with the SEIC Literacy Connector, with almost all citing increased improvements in literacy data relating to the work they had undertaken.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 24 schools across the region received bespoke support for the whole session from the SEIC Play Pedagogy Connector Programme. Tailored input was based on data gathered in initial audits and evaluations at the end of each of the Connector sessions. This provided focussed collaborative learning support to each member of the cohort across the session, to support improvement in the use of play pedagogy within their schools. By the end of the school session, 97% of settings reported that improvements had had a positive impact on learners.

- in the latest session for which information was provided, 13 secondary schools across the region received bespoke support for the whole session, through the SEIC Learning Pathways & Positive Destinations Connector Programme. This enabled collaboration and engagement in regular networking and improvement activities across the school session, including the use of 1-1 school visits, reflective tools, resources and improvement exemplars. On-going feedback gathered from the Connector schools showed that 94% of participants felt the content of learning was relevant to their context.

- 18 SEIC Networks and 19 Secondary Subject Networks involving over 300 educators and partners have been established over a number of years through the SEIC to support collaboration with others with shared remits, settings or subject areas, to enable the sharing of practice, approaches and resources. SEIC Networks are self-sustaining which means they are able to set their own agenda, pace, and areas of focus. Networks have members from each of the five SEIC local authorities and links to SEIC and SEIT Officers.

- the SEIC Associates initiative brings together local authority leaders in quality improvement across the region. The cohort for session 2023-24 includes 55 leaders from all 5 SEIC authorities, who are supported to collaborate, share knowledge and to work alongside improvement teams in their own and other local authorities as part of quality improvement processes.

- settings involved in SEIC Universal and Bespoke programmes provided 648 evaluations on the reginal supports provided in the last session. The majority of those confirmed that the support was relevant to their practice, had improved their knowledge and that collaboration with other practitioners/settings had been beneficial. Analysis of the detailed feedback provided was a factor in the SEIC prioritising further opportunities for settings to link together, which resulted in further positive feedback from the settings and practitioners involved.

- the SEIC also provided supporting evidence from HMIe inspections in areas supported by regional programmes. This included positive feedback across all 5 SEIC authorities, including in improvements for pupils in literacy and numeracy attainment, pupil attendance, engagement with digital technology, leadership, pupil voice, health and wellbeing, pupil confidence and other aspects.

- based on evaluation and reflection, the SEIC have re-focussed their programmes towards providing a more streamlined support offer and a reorientation of regional resource to focus on bespoke support for high quality learning and teaching and increased collaboration among practitioners. This approach is reflected in the SEIC cohort-based bespoke support examples referenced in this report.

- the SEIC Trade Union Group includes representatives from, AHDS, EIS, NASUWT, SLS, SSTA and UNISON. It meets regularly to ensure that SEIC communication methods and approaches are appropriate to school leaders and staff.

- the SEIC Board, includes a Headteacher representative from each SEIC local authority, ensuring headteacher/school input in development of the SEIC regional improvement plan, overseeing its progress and impact, setting the direction of the SEIC work and approving the main budget decisions.

- the SEIC has put in place arrangements to ensure that those supporting delivery of their programmes report regularly and consistently on progress, with support tailored to achieving improving outcomes and to ensuring that RIC work contributes to the improvements made by individual schools and at local authority level. SEIC Connector programmes and SEIC Research Schools also undertake evaluation including initial auditing and discovery work, identifying of outcomes, recording reflections and feedback, reporting on the extent to which outcomes are achieved and the creation of case studies to record and share learning.

South West Educational Improvement Collaborative (SWEIC)

Evidence provided by the SWEIC to this review include the following examples:

- collaborative opportunities delivered by the SWEIC were attended by over 1,700 practitioners and leaders over the 2022-23 session. This includes a range of events and interactions across sectors, subjects and themes, including to support classroom teachers, early years practitioners, support staff, primary and secondary depute headteachers, numeracy leads, secondary middle leaders and other staff.

- 227 establishments across the SWEIC region have been supported to collaborate with other schools with similar context through the SWEIC Schools Improvement Network. The purpose of this network is to support collaborative action research within groups of 'similar' schools across the SWEIC, to enable headteachers and peers to share their school's strengths and needs and to identify common themes for further collaboration. Feedback from the schools involved is positive and it is proposed that 40 secondary schools are included in the next phase.

- 262 senior pupils across the SWEIC region have completed courses with the digital *@SW Connects* programme and been presented for qualifications (111 in year 1 and 151 in year 2 of the programme). Most were at Advanced Higher level (SCQF 7) and attainment rates were positive with 24% in 2023 achieving an A grade and 52% an A or B, with A-D pass rates at 88% (pre appeal).

  All SWEIC secondary schools currently having access to at least 11 AH courses. Both cohorts have comprised significant numbers of pupils from SIMD 1-4. Feedback from learners, teachers and schools is positive and correlates with the attainment data highlighted from the SQA 2023 estimates. Base schools have also indicated that they would like to see the offer expanded, including for AH Sciences.

- 185 practitioners participated in the SWEIC Play Pedagogy programme in session 2022-23. This session-long programme delivered professional learning to enhance a shared understanding of the concept in the Early Years curriculum, increase practitioner confidence and address the needs of participants. Cross-RIC links have also been established in this work between the Northern Alliance Early Years team and the SWEIC seconded officer. An interim evaluation on the confidence of participants to deliver the play pedagogy approach increased from 48.4% prior to the course to 79.2% at the latest evaluation.

- 151 practitioners participated in the SWEIC Early Level Literacy Pedagogy programme in session 2022-23. Delivered as online professional learning for early years and primary practitioners, this programme highlights gaps identified in aspects of literacy skills across Early and First Levels and provides professional learning sessions across a range of identified areas.

- to date, over 80 school leaders and practitioners have been supported by the SWEIC to engage with Winning Scotland Foundation's Growth Mindset Teams programme. It provides a blend of independent online learning, tutor guidance, collegiate discussion and project delivery, empowering teaching professionals to have a greater understanding of growth mindsets and embed approaches within their schools. 40 participants have signed up for this programme in 2023.

- the SWEIC Maths group facilitates practitioner support for learning, teaching and assessment in numeracy and mathematics. Examples include: a series of twilight sessions on Embedding Assessment in Numeracy and Maths, attended by 83 practitioners, with CLPL resources available to other practitioners via Sway, a cohort of 15 numeracy leads participated in the Critical Friends Programme with the University of the West of Scotland's Ayr Campus, and 12 practitioners participated in Enhancing Practice in Mathematics CLPL with the University of Glasgow.

   STEM school curriculum leads from across all four local SWEIC authorities have also been provided with funding to support pilot practitioner enquiry approaches in Mathematics and Design & Technology.

- the SWEIC Literacy PL Programme and network of literacy leads supports practitioners across the region through the gathering of evidence and sharing of learning resources and best practice between the member authorities. Specific events include the SWEIC Literacy Fortnight, where 46 practitioners joined that team to access and share over 100 literacy learning resources.

- the SWEIC 4 Stages of Progress framework was adopted to support practitioners across authorities, stages, clusters and schools to develop a shared understanding of the stages of BGE progress, and to enhance confidence in making robust and accurate professional judgements on progress. The framework was launched to over 80 practitioners and shared across all SWEIC establishments, with 88% of practitioners who responded indicating they would continue to use the resource.

- 28 early years and primary practitioners across the region participated in the initial Froebel in Childhood Practice programme. In collaboration with Moray House, University of Edinburgh, practitioners were supported to develop and embed the Froebel play principles for learning in early childhood, to improve outcomes for children and young people. The programme also aims to build leadership capacity in the early years sector. 4 graduates from the programme were recruited to lead the SWEIC Play Pedagogy Programme 2 and 46 participants engaged in follow-up event to further raise awareness and cascade learning.

- in the 2022-23 session, 2 cohorts of secondary middle leaders participated in the SWEIC Leadership of Pedagogues programme, to bridge a gap identified in the professional learning opportunities for secondary middle leaders across the region. The programme received GTCS Professional Recognition for Secondary Middle Leaders and was expanded during session 2022/23 to include development of a middle leaders' programme for Primary practitioners.

- the SWEIC Enhancing Opportunities programme was a pilot project designed to meet the needs of a cohort of 10 pupils in S1-S3 who, post COVID, had not re-engaged with their learning in school. With the aim to help transition pupils back to the classroom through a dedicated teacher using an online delivery platform across the 4 SWEIC authorities. Feedback was positive and the pilot saw five of the pupils re-engage into mainstream learning within their schools as a result.

- the SWEIC 'Inclusive Practitioner Programme' was rolled out this session. It focuses on developing and sharing practice to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people. It has included inputs from educational psychologists and speech and language therapists. Work has also led to a pilot project on Adaptive Teaching (differentiation), with the potential to impact on approximately 120 teachers and 1500 learners.

- to further support professional collaboration and delivery of regional programmes, the SWEIC facilitates a number of sector networks, supporting practitioners and colleagues across the region to collaborate and share learning in areas such as Inclusion, Curriculum Networks, Psychological Services, Digital Futures, Early Years, Staffing, also and Community Learning and Development.

- headteachers across the region are also encouraged to share innovation and best practice through the SWEIC Headteacher Innovation Group. Initially established as 2 groups – 1 each for primary headteachers and secondary headteachers – following consultation with members it is planned that membership of the group is increased and be amalgamated to include head teacher colleagues from across all sectors.

- initially established in 2022, the SWEIC EAL (English as Additional Language) network, has also evolved in response to the increased number of Ukrainian pupils and parents accommodated across the region. This included the provision of online learning and resources for practitioners, and the development of an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) forum. Links with Ayrshire College has also supported the offer of an ESOL qualification on a virtual platform being rolled out as a pilot across the SWEIC. Initial feedback of the pilot indicates real impact and is being well received by learners. This work is currently being developed as a case study of innovative practice which will be shared nationally.

Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative (TRIC)

Evidence provided by the TRIC to this review include the following examples:

- 170 students have enrolled in the Tayside Virtual Campus for the 2023-24 session, which provides senior pupils across the region with equity of access to a selection of Advanced Highers, irrespective of their school size or location. Teachers across secondary schools in Tayside are involved in delivering the Virtual Campus online learning, the Campus also offers professional learning to support teachers, which is delivered both online and face-to-face.

  The Virtual Campus began as a pilot in 2021-22, with 20 students studying one of three AH subjects and was expanded to 39 students across six AH subjects the following session. Qualification results in 2022-23 were broadly in line with national data but had a larger percentage of grade A bands (38%) and with 50% of learners gaining an A or B award.

  The Virtual campus worked in partnership with the SQA to develop an introductory course for all young people embarking on its Advanced Higher online learning. The "Preparing for Digital Learning in the Senior Phase" course is accredited at SCQF Level 6 and worth 3 points. Work has also commenced with Dundee University to explore ways in which the Virtual Campus, and other online learning programmes, can be used to help widen access to Higher Education, particularly amongst the most disadvantaged learners.

- in session 2022-23, over 260 teachers and school leaders participated in a whole day professional learning event on Moderation, Assessment and Curriculum design, provided in response to practitioner consultation on professional learning needs. Evaluation has informed further actions in the TRIC plan for session 2023-24. This focus has also supported the training of 281 trained QAMSOs across the region. Participant feedback from this learning was positive, demonstrating improvement in practitioner confidence across each of the improvement measures.

- in session 2021-22, 189 practitioners attended TRIC professional learning sessions to support the building of confidence, knowledge and implementation of STEM activities.

- during session 2021-22, 131 schools in the region participated in the TRIC Rights Respecting Schools programme to help embed the UNCRC into schools' curriculum. This included professional learning to schools, including sessions run by Education Scotland and the One World Centre in conjunction with local authority/TRIC staff, which were attended by over 500 members of staff.

- the TRIC digital network informs and supports the delivery of professional learning to support practitioners in Tayside develop digital pedagogy and skills. Nine practitioner sessions were held in session 2022-23, to increase awareness of digital skills or resources which can be used to develop knowledge of the technology's curriculum and digital pedagogy. There were 329 practitioner engagements across these sessions, which included two courses run in collaboration with Education Scotland. Practitioner feedback was strong, with 95.8% of those who completed the evaluation for the 'This is Digital Learning' Course strongly agreed or agreed that the professional learning provided them with knowledge or skills they could use to develop their teaching practice.

- by the end of session 2021-22, the TRIC had supported 26 schools in the region to achieve the Digital Schools Award Scotland, with a further 106 schools enrolled across the region. Support was informed by a digital needs analysis across all three TRIC authorities, which led to creation of a Digital Plan and strategic actions, with actions and measures reviewed regularly by the TRIC Digital Network.

- in session 2021 – 2022, a cohort of 15 headteachers from across Tayside participated in the *TRIC Leadership, Development and Induction Programme*. Delivered online and through multiple workshops, this programme reflected the new GTCS Standard for Headship and was developed in consultation with participants to meet the leadership development needs of the cohort. This was positively recognised by participants in their evaluations, with 75% categorising the programme as being very useful in developing confidence in the role of headteacher. 25% said it was moderately useful.

- TRIC professional learning networks have been established across the 3 RIC authorities, to support the sharing of knowledge, practice and resources, provide peer support, and encourage teachers to engage in meaningful and relevant discussions about learning and teaching. These include professional learning networks in Digital Learning, Numeracy and Maths, and Moderation and Assessment.

- TRIC officers and teachers have designed a learning, teaching and assessment toolkit shared across the region through headteacher development sessions, to support pedagogical improvement in classrooms and to support school level self-directed professional learning. The impact of this resource is currently being measured.

- building on its partnership with health and social care, the TRIC has also developed a range of shared, evidence-based children and family-centred strategies and approaches which focus on prevention, early intervention, and tiered responses to needs. These include Connected Tayside: an emotional health and wellbeing strategy for children and young people, the Tayside Strategy for Parents and the Child Healthy Weight Strategy.

- the TRIC Learning and Attainment group identifies their improvement priorities through a range of school and pupil-level data, including data on attendance and absence, BGE data, CfE achievement data, information on the poverty-related attainment gap, health and well-being data and data on school leaver destinations. They organise this data around the National Improvement Framework priorities, and used a sample of school inspection reports, school improvement plans and Insight benchmarking for secondary schools to inform their plans.

- the TRIC practitioner enquiry workstream is planned and delivered collaboratively with the University of Dundee, to support teachers to engage critically with professional reading and with Leadership Development and Induction programmes, to ensure that newly appointed and aspiring school leaders engage with research on managing change and leading learning.

West Partnership (WP)

Evidence provided by the WP to this review include the following examples:

- in session 2022-23, the WP Leadership, Empowerment and improvement workstream engaged with approximately 900 practitioners, including:
  - 450 primary leaders and teachers supported through the Improving Our Schools programme and network.
  - 143 teachers across all sectors supported through the Improving Our Classrooms programme (2023-24 detail below).
  - 40 deputy headteachers and principal teachers across all sectors through the Thinking About Headship programme.
  - 175 secondary practitioners supported through the Improving Our Department/Faculty programme.
  - 86 headteachers and leaders supported though coaching and learning sets, co-facilitated by the Mudd Partnership.

- in session 2022-23, the WP Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment workstream engaged with approximately 1,900 practitioners, including:
  - specialist networks with 68 practitioners from all WP authorities.
  - workstream projects supporting 10 schools in the primary curriculum project.
  - 49 schools in the BGE secondary curriculum project.
  - 39 schools in the Keep Scotland Beautiful project.
  - 170 practitioners in the Pedagogy for All project.
  - 1,613 participants in assessment and moderation training. This workstream is further supported by a range of tools and resources.

WP specialist networks informing this workstream and supported by individual action plans include: Assessment and Moderation Co-ordinators, Additional Support Needs Assessment and Moderation, Senior Phase Assessment and Moderation, Digital Officers, Literacy Officers, Maths Officers, EAL officers, and Gaelic Officers.

- in session 2022-23, the WP Wellbeing for Learning workstream engaged with just under 1,700 practitioners and participants, including:
  - specialist networks with 56 practitioners from all WP authorities.
  - three UNCRC sessions for 205 practitioners.
  - an attendance spotlight session for 261 practitioners.
  - a session to share the FVWL attendance tool with 163 practitioners.
  - eight circle training sessions for 334 practitioners.
  - six Personal & Social Education (PSE) sessions for 202 practitioners.

- o 408 children and young people trained as young leaders of learning, with 68 school leads.

- o seven inclusion in mainstream sessions for 217 participants.

- o five family learning sessions for 151 participants.

- o four keeping trauma in mind sessions for 86 participants.

WP specialist networks informing this workstream and supported by action plans include: Families and Communities, CLD Mangers Network, PSHE Secondary, Stand Alone Additional Support for Learning HTs, Home Education Officers, Senior Inclusion Officers, The Promise, Attendance, and UNCRC.

- this year, 148 teachers have registered for the *WP Improving our Classrooms (IOC) programme*. This is a Masters level, year-long programme for teachers in all sectors, with successful completion gaining 30 Masters Credits and GTCS Professional Recognition. The programme/learning focusses on self-evaluation at classroom level, to inform and support: improved learning and teaching, the use of data informed interventions, improved attainment and achievement, and the provision of equity and excellence for learners.

  Practitioners evaluating the impact of the IOC programme on their learners they work with and their own practice. An overview of this data, based on 83 practitioners, found: for learners that 95% saw an increase in attainment, 100% saw improvement in confidence, 95% saw improvement in engagement and 94% saw improvement in attitude to learning, and for teachers that 94% were using data more, 96% were more confident, 96% said their skills had increased, and 98% said their understanding had increased.

  IOC has been further extended by two establishment-level programmes – Improving Our Schools and Improving Our Departments and Faculties (pilot). In the current session, 360 and 175 teachers and leaders respectively are participating in these. In addition to the feedback above, focus group participants involved in these programmes commented strongly on their impact for practitioners and pupils.

- the West Partnership Online School (West OS) provides an online bank of resources to support pupils with their learning and revision at school and to provide practitioners with online resources to support and enhance learning and teaching. The West OS includes: a resource bank of over 1,400 videos across the BGE and senior phase subjects. As of April 2023, there have been over 86,000 unique users of West OS content from across Scotland. In addition to the recorded resources, the BGE Live offer provides real time, interactive lessons that take place during the school day and provide opportunities for pupils and practitioners to create, think critically, collaborate and learn from a variety of experts and partners. This session, 391 separate schools are using these sessions. Engagement in the West OS and BGE Live offer is increasing, and feedback has been consistently positive on its impact. It is currently used in 1,200 schools across Scotland this session.

- in session 2022-23, 97 nurseries engaged in WP research of the increase in funded early learning and childcare (ELC) to 1140 hours, to explore the impact for children's outcomes across the region. Initial findings show that the majority of children are meeting their developmental milestones, but that it was difficult to identify if these findings are a result of the increase in funded hours. Since the implementation of 1140 hours, over 80% of parents involved in this research did perceive that their child was more enthusiastic and engaged in their learning, was more independent and that they (parents) were more confident in supporting their child's learning at home.

Also of interest in evaluating the impact of the West Partnership:

- the WP has an established relationship with the Robert Owen Centre, (ROC, University of Glasgow), who supports the WP through: Professorial support and challenge, as members of the WP Board and to the RIC Lead, practical support for leaders and teachers undertaking collaborative action research activities, and through annual external evaluations on the progress and impact of the West Partnership.

    The most recent ROC evaluation of the WP, 'Report 3', looks at WP activity across the 2022-23 session. Key findings identified in that evaluation include:
    - "participants are clear about the impact of the WP added value and impact of collaboration. At a strategic level this is in the form of strengthened relationships, functioning of the Board and in fostering a culture of collaboration. Participants were clear about the types of professional learning offered by the WP which had been most effective in dealing with recovery from the pandemic, those programmes which enabled dialogue and collaborative working with colleagues from different LAs and which had led to impacts upon learner achievement and attainment.'
    - the WP continues to build capacity across the education system in the west of Scotland at classroom, school and LA level. It is also demonstrating impact for individual classroom practitioners, school leaders and children and young people. WP added value to the LAs is still a prominent impact for many. It has achieved this through a focus on collaborative and networked learning, building collective capacity and capital and high-quality CLPL complemented by similarly high-quality resources.'
    - the evidence provided in section three indicates that there has been substantial progress regarding impact of the WP objectives at school and classroom level. The interview and survey data strongly indicate that teachers' engagement with the WP has enhanced their professional learning, enabling them to have a positive impact on children and young people's learning.'

- the overall WP strategy of creating a networked learning system underpinned by collaboration across different types of boundaries and systematic enquiry and evidence building (Madrid Miranda and Chapman, 2021) is now yielding dividends and are worthy of future investment, especially in times of financial austerity."

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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