CLACKMANNANSHIRE COUNCIL

THIS PAPER RELATES TO ITEM 4

ON THE AGENDA

Report to: **People Committee**

Date of Meeting: **14 March 2019**

Subject: **Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative - Progress Report**

Report by: **RIC Lead Officer, Robert Naylor, Director, Children's Services, Falkirk Council**

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The report provides an update on the work of the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) and the Scottish Government's Empowering Schools agenda.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the People Committee note and comment on:

(1) the contents of this report;
(2) The Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Governance Plan; (Appendix 1)
(3) Achievements to Date (Appendix 2)
(4) Thematic Inspection of Readiness for Empowerment, Education Scotland report of December 2018 (Appendix 3) and
(5) that further progress reports are presented to the People Committee twice per year

3.0 Background

3.1 At its meeting of 30 August 2018 the People Committee noted the submission of the Phase 2 Forth Valley and West Lothian (FVWL) Regional Improvement Plan to Education Scotland and agreed that the Chief Education Officer would provide further reports which would detail:

- feedback received from Education Scotland on the Phase 2 Regional Improvement Plan;
- the allocation of support to be received from Education Scotland Officers;
- the level of support the FVWL Collaborative will receive from the Scottish Government; and

- the arrangements for evaluating progress regarding the Headteacher's Charter, Parental and Community Engagement, and Pupil Participation.

3.2 This report provides information regarding the feedback from Education Scotland on the Phase 2 Regional Improvement Plan; the level of support the FVWL Collaborative will receive from the Scottish Government; and a summary of the key findings of the Education Scotland report of December 2018: "Thematic Inspection of Readiness for Empowerment".

3.3 Further reports will be provided to the Education Executive regarding the allocation of support to be received from Education Scotland Officers; and the arrangements for evaluating progress regarding the Headteacher's Charter, Parental and Community Engagement, and Pupil Participation once further information has been received from the Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

Feedback from Education Scotland

3.4 The Lead Officer, Robert Naylor (Falkirk Council) participated in a peer review process with colleagues from Education Scotland and from the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative at the end of September 2018.

3.5 This process involved evaluative discussion regarding progress with the Phase 1 Plans and the content and aspiration of the Phase 2 Plans of the FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative and the West Partnership.

3.6 As an outcome of this process key actions for each of these Regional Improvement Collaboratives were agreed.

3.7 The key actions agreed for the FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative were that:

- Over time the Collaborative will develop a Governance model going forward that effectively reflects the principle of leading from the middle, collaboration and bottom up. The Governance structure will ensure that the leadership and work stream groups will be responsible for developing the **"offer"** to schools and practitioners, with the reference and engagement groups helping to develop the **"ask".** Engagement groups will be comprised of pupils, parents, practitioners and wider stakeholder groups: and

- The Lead Officer will report on the progress of the Collaborative to respective Chief Executives and to local elected members via the relevant education committees of each council. Centre based colleagues will also be updated on the work of the RIC.

Scottish Government Funding Support

3.8 The Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative received an offer of grant for £899,270 from the Scottish Government on 1 November 2018. This grant covers the period from 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019.

3.9 Details of the planned use of this funding are outlined later in this report.

Readiness for Empowerment

3.10 Throughout October and November officers from Education Scotland visited all 32 Scottish local authorities to undertake a thematic review to assess the school system's "Readiness for Empowerment". They visited Clackmannanshire on 8 November 2018.

3.11 Education Scotland noted the positive culture of empowerment within the Education Service specifically, Headteachers shared that there is:

- Clear leadership
- Good balance of support and challenge

And a strong sense of belonging to SMT

3.12 Inspectors met with groups of primary and secondary head teachers; promoted and unpromoted teachers; professional association representatives; and local authority staff. They also reviewed all relevant local authority documentation.

3.13 The Thematic Review sought to reach an evaluation, across Scotland, of the school system's readiness to be empowered in the following four key areas:

- Improvement;
- Curriculum;
- Staffing; and
- Funding.

3.14 The report made a number of recommendations for national partners; local authorities; and headteachers and schools. These recommendations are detailed on page 28/29 of Appendix 3.

4.0 Considerations

Progress with Key Actions identified in the Review of the Phase 2 Plan

4.1 In order to strengthen and develop the governance arrangements for the FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative the Lead Officer met with Council Leaders/Education Portfolio Holders from each local authority, the local authority Chief Executives and a representative from Education Scotland on 30 November 2018 to discuss and agree arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the Collaborative.

4.2 It was agreed that a Regional Board would be established whose members would comprise a senior elected member (Council Leader or Education Portfolio Holder/Convener) from each local authority and the four Council Chief Executives.

4.3 This Regional Board will receive reports from the Lead Officer; will monitor the progress and pace of the work of the collaborative; and provide appropriate challenge for emerging areas for collaborative work. The FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative Governance Plan is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

4.4 The Regional Board will meet twice per year, in March and September

Progress on the work of the Collaborative

4.5 Significant progress has been made in establishing the Regional Improvement Collaborative and in progressing some key activities and actions regarding both the original work-streams and developing new areas of focus.

4.6 A report entitled “Achievements to Date” detailing this progress is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

Use of Scottish Government Funding Support

4.7 The Grant from the Scottish Government will be used primarily to pay for the secondment of staff from the existing workforces of the four local authorities to lead key areas of development work.

4.8 At the time of writing a recruitment process is underway which is being supported by Corporate Human Resources personnel from Falkirk and West Lothian Councils.

4.9 Seconded staff will continue to be employed by their own local authority for the duration of their secondments.

4.10 Staff are being seconded to the following roles:

- Work-stream leads (for Literacy, Numeracy, Early Learning and Childcare, and Career Long Professional Learning);
- Data Analyst;
- Data Coaches;
- Administrative Support
- Communication
- Regional Improvement Collaborative Development Officer

Readiness for Empowerment

4.11 The FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative and Clackmannanshire Education Service will consider the recommendations within the Education Scotland report in the coming months and ensure that our practice and engagement continues to reflect the aspirations of an empowered school system.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 The Phase 1 and Phase 2 Plans were developed in collaboration across all four local authority areas.

5.2 The Lead Officer will engage with wider stakeholders from each Council's Community Planning Partnerships and with trade union and parent representatives to ensure that they are included in the developing work of the collaborative.

5.3 Further consultation is ongoing through the implementation of the Phase 2 Plan. Further details are included within Appendix 2 to this report "Achievements to Date".

6.0 Financial Implications

All work undertaken to date has been met from within the existing resources of the four participating councils. As outlined at paragraph 3.8 above the FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative has received a grant from the Scottish Government of £899,270 for all expenditure incurred between 1 August 2018 and 31 July 2019.

7.0 Sustainability Implications

The paper has no sustainability implications.

8.0 Resource Implications

8.1 The staff resources of the four participating councils have been allocated as appropriate by the senior education officers of each council to achieve the necessary progress to develop both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Regional Improvement Plans. Additional staff are currently being recruited following the Scottish Government grant award to further develop the work of the Regional Improvement Collaborative.

9.0 Exempt Reports

9.1 Is the report exempt? No

10.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box ☑)

Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all	☑
Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life	☑
Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential	☑
Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish	
The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence	

(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes √ No □

9.0 Legality

There are no legal implications arising from this report

10.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 - The Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Governance Plan;
Appendix 2 - Achievements to Date

Appendix 3 - "Thematic Inspection of Readiness for Empowerment" Education Scotland report of December 2018

11.0 Background Papers

Author(s)

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Approved by

NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
Anne Pearson	Chief Education Officer	[redacted]
Fiona McOmish	Strategic Director (People)	

Forth Valley & West Lothian

Regional Improvement Collaborative

Governance Plan

January 2019

Governance Arrangements

Each Local Authority has its own unique set of circumstances. The experiences and learning from the SAC and PEF influence the way we work in partnership. The Forth Valley & West Lothian RIC aims to improve outcomes for children and young people in line with the National Improvement Framework for education:

- Excellence through raising attainment: ensuring that every child achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, set out within Curriculum for Excellence levels, and the right range of skills, qualifications and achievements to allow them to succeed and
- Achieving equity: ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Each Local Authority is responsible for the provision of education for children and young people in terms of planning and delivery and will be accountable for attainment and achievement outcomes. The RIC will provide 'added value' to the work of each LA and will engage in an annual review which is informed by robust evaluation and a revised plan submitted to the regional board.

It has been agreed by the four Local Authorities that lead roles will be aligned to provide coherence to the work that is being undertaken on a regional basis. The Chief Executive Officer, RIC Lead Director and RIC Development Officer will sit within one LA for a 12 month basis and then be reviewed.

Funding: FV&WL Grant

The Scottish Government has given the RIC a grant (1 year) and the funds will be held with the council who holds the RIC Lead Officer post. A report on the use of grant funds will be produced and shared with the Regional Board and Scottish Government.

Staff employed to support the work of the RIC do so on a secondment basis and are line managed by their LA Lead Director. They remain accountable to their LA.

Strategic and Operational Leadership

The work of the RIC will be supported by a number of strategic and operational teams. The purpose and role of each team within the governance arrangements are as follows:

1. <u>Regional Board</u>

Membership

Chief Executive Officers and Education Spokespersons of Falkirk, Clackmannanshire, West Lothian and Stirling.

Purpose

- To share the vision of the Collaborative.
- To drive the success of the FV&WL RIC plan.
- To support and facilitate collaborative projects and working together.
- To oversee the RIC grant allocation from the Scottish Government.

Reporting

The Regional Board will receive reports on the progress of the RIC from the Regional Lead Officer and Directors' group and will meet biannually. Chief Executive Officers will be responsible for political reporting arrangements and sign off the plan in their own LA. The Chief Inspector of Education Scotland will be involved in signing off the annual plan and be updated on progress through the Education Scotland Regional Adviser. The Regional Lead Officer will attend the National Council of RIC Lead Officers and will share progress of RICs at a national level.

2. Lead Directors Team

Membership

Relevant Director/Chief Education Officer with responsibility for Education from each Local Authority. The Regional HMI lead from Education Scotland is also a member of this team.

Purpose

- To provide clarity and direction to the vision and aims of the RIC.
- To support the Connect Team (work stream leads) in shaping and delivering outcomes for each priority.
- To ensure that all partners and stakeholders are fully consulted and engaged in the development of the RIC.
- To share key developments in their own Local Authorities and consider opportunities for collaborative working that will support improvement outcomes.
- To evaluate the overall performance of the RIC and support a robust measurement plan.
- To facilitate clear communication between the key groups that will drive the work of the RIC forward.
- To review and report on the impact of the grant on progress with achieving targeted outcomes.

Reporting

The Lead Directors team reports to the regional board. It meets every six weeks and receives updates on progress of the work streams from the RIC Development Officers. Formal reports will be produced from each work stream quarterly which will be presented

to the lead directors' team for evaluation of progress. The evaluation of progress will be supported by the Performance Team. Each director will present regular progress of the RIC to elected members at each LA's committee meetings.

3. Connect Team (Work Stream Leads)

Membership

RIC Development Officer; the lead from each work stream- Numeracy, Literacy, Early Learning & Childcare, CLPL(Career Long Professional Learning); a representative from the Performance Team; a representative from the Communication Team.

Purpose

- To add value to the work of each Local Authority.
- To bring coherence across the priority work streams and work collaboratively to plan and develop themes for improvement.
- To use information from the RIC Performance Profile to inform the direction of focus and to identify areas requiring improvement to support achieving excellence and equity aims.
- To develop and implement a Communication and Engagement strategy in collaboration with the Communication Team.
- To support and develop a culture that empowers practitioners and develops systems leadership capacity by delivering quality professional learning programmes and providing opportunities to lead the growing range of projects supporting the RIC priorities.

Reporting

The Connect Team reports to the Lead Directors Team. It meets monthly and will produce quarterly reports for the lead team. It will also provide updated plans on an annual basis. Reporting will be supported by data from the Performance Team.

4. Work Streams

Membership

Work stream leads; Range of practitioners & Education officers; A representative from the Performance Team; A representative from the Communication Team (both will attend aligned with the venue which rotates); RIC Improvement Adviser; Care Inspectorate (ELCC Team); Forth Valley & West Lothian College representative.

Purpose

- To support the development of 'the Ask and the Offer' of the RIC.
- To create and produce driver diagrams and action plans for each priority.

- To clarify overarching aims and provide detail of what is to be achieved.
- To develop measurement plans that demonstrate baseline measures, tracking and monitoring of progress, targets and outcomes.
- To reflect on and act on the analysis provided by the Performance Team to develop robust processes to measure, collect and collate data which will be analysed to inform progress.
- To co-ordinate and monitor progress of sub-teams leading on the range of related projects for each priority theme.
- To communicate the work of the group to all stakeholders and partners and build collaborative networks to support developing themes.
- To engage with stakeholders on the work and progress of projects and inform next steps from feedback through RIC Consultation events/evaluations and meeting with RIC reference groups.

Reporting

The work streams – report to the RIC Development Officer. They will meet monthly with diaries agreed for the year.

5. **Performance Team**

The Performance Team comprises a data analyst from each LA and the role of the team is to provide a full Performance Profile for the RIC, support the work stream measurement plans and support and build confidence in practitioners using data for improvement. The team reports to the Lead Directors' Team. The team is supported by the National Analytic Team (Scottish Government).

Communication Team

The Communication Team comprises an IT lead from each LA with input from LA Communication Officers The role of the team is to support the creation of a RIC digital platform that will provide a communication portal for collaboration across the four local authorities. A digital sharing agreement will support communication throughout the RIC. The team will work with work-streams to develop relevant communication media for example, twitter, webinars, and blogs. They will also support strategies for PR in advertising professional learning opportunities and RIC events.

Engagement Groups

A number of Reference Groups- Early Years, Primary and Secondary HTs; Practitioners will be formed to discuss current and evolving priority themes, and support building the scope of the RIC.

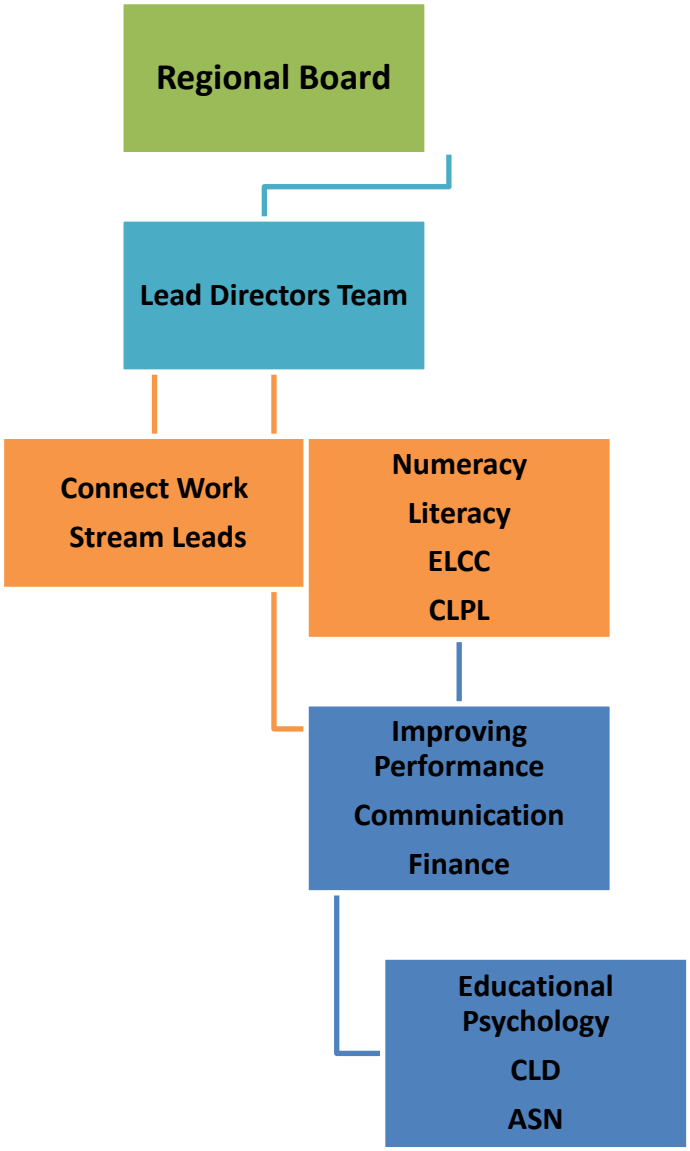
Professional Associations have met with the RIC Lead Officer and a formal calendar of engagement meetings will be established. We will meet and engage with LNCT and single

status representatives. We will also engage with Children & Young People, Parents, Officers, and Partners to develop the work of the RIC.

Widening Collaboration

As the scope of the RIC expands, new groups are forming and will be considered in the wider planned vision. These include projects led by Education Psychology Teams, CLD, ASN, Finance Teams.

Forth Valley & West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative



Membership of Teams

	Clacks	Falkirk	Stirling	West Lothian
Strategic Board CEO Education Chair	Nikki Bridle Cllr Graham Lindsay	Kenneth Lawrie	Carol Beattie Susan McGill	Graham Hope Cllr David Dodds
Elected members	People Committee		Children & Young People Committee	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel
RIC Lead		Robert Naylor		
Lead Directors Team	Anne Pearson		Kevin Kelman	Elaine Cook
RIC Devt Officer				Siobhan McGarty

Connect Team Work stream leads	**Numeracy** Cathy Quinn	**CLPL** Rhona Jay	**ELCC** Judy Edwards	**Literacy** Maureen McNaughton

Forth Valley & West Lothian RIC

Achievements to Date

January 2019

Aims of the RIC

The FV&WL Collaborative has agreed a shared vision to work together in partnership to identify key areas for improvement that aim to achieve the twin aims of the NIF:

Excellence through raising attainment

Achieving equity

There is a clear focus on shared priorities which are summarised as:

1. Numeracy
2. Literacy
3. Early learning and Childcare
4. CLPL
5. Improving performance

5 lead officers supported by the lead team of directors have taken these priorities forward and progress is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

In phase 2 of planning, a **Communication and Engagement Strategy** has been created and has been central to developments in building awareness and engagement with the RIC. Progress includes:

- Head Teacher messages (power points) to discuss at inset days
- RIC lead team attending range of HT/Heads of Establishment meetings (**Appendix 2**)
- RIC lead team presenting the plan at LA committee meetings
- RIC lead/development officer meeting with non-teaching unions
- Development officer meeting with wider partners
- Sharing the plan and sending to all schools/educational establishments
- FV&WL Brand logo and strapline 'Collaborating for Improvement'
- Launch of RIC update (Autumn, Winter)
- Consultation paper with stakeholders- closed 12th January, outcomes being considered.
- Launch of Communication team
- Launch of Connect Team - minutes and progress updates to lead team; meetings aligned with directors and performance team meetings
- Support from Performance team, Improvement Adviser and Communication Team reps at each Connect Team meeting
- FV&WL RIC Digital platform nearing completion
- Twitter established
- Secondary and Primary HT reference groups created

- Mapping of all 6 RIC plans- overview and sharing ideas with West Partnership and partner Development Officers

In progress

The following developments are in progress:

Governance plan- to be shared with Committees

Update on full RIC Profile including performance

Measurement plan update

Recruitment plan

Digital and data sharing agreements

Phase 3 plan

Growth Mindset project (Numeracy & Literacy) in collaboration with third sector charity, aligned with university accredited PL for practitioners

Evolving RIC

There are a number of evolving projects which are being discussed and designed in consultation with teachers and partners (**Appendix 3**)

Recruitment

The following full time seconded posts are in the process of being recruited to support the work of the RIC and as a result of the successful bid for funding from the Scottish Government:

Work stream leads in Literacy, Numeracy, CLPL, ELCC

Data Analyst (Performance Officer)

Data Coaches x 4 (1 for each Local Authority)

Admin Officer (0.5) and Communication officer (0.2)

Improving Performance

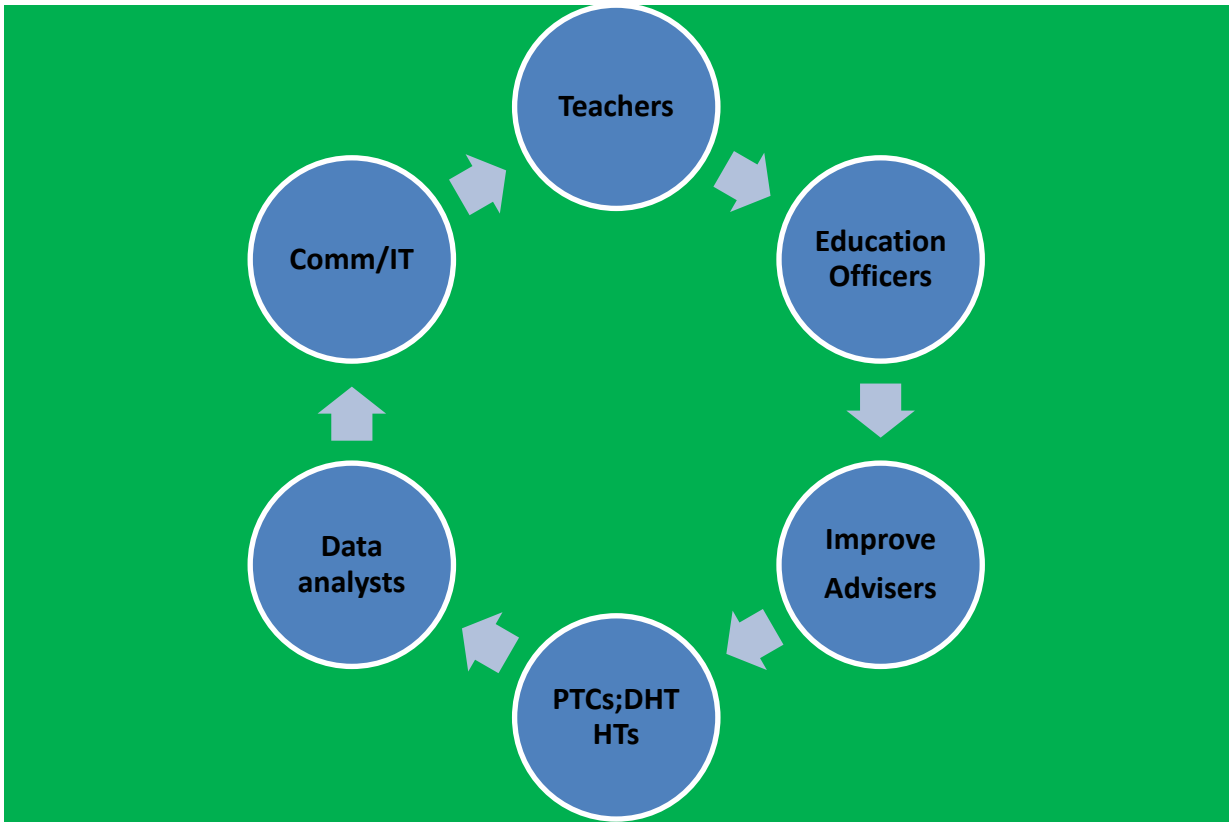
The Performance Team role is focused on:

Producing an up to date RIC Performance Profile
Supporting Measurement Plans and data analysis for each of the work streams
Developing a practitioner programme to improve confidence in using data to improve performance

Mapping out numeracy and literacy strategies across similar schools to peer collaborate
Identifying successful 'Closing the Gap' strategies and supporting a collaborative network

Empowering RIC

The RIC is underpinned by an empowering culture of practitioner involvement, engagement and leadership in a growing range of innovative projects. A diverse range of people are working together to shape, influence and develop themes.



The FV&WL RIC has been the first to undertake the national Improvement Training programme which is supported by the Scottish Government- SCLIP (Scottish Coaching & Leading Improvement Programme). 30 practitioners from across the RIC have undertaken the programme which involves 2x3 full days, 4x 2 hour Webex sessions, reading texts and engaging in a practical project. The main themes are Coaching, Leadership and Improvement techniques.

With the addition of full time work stream leads, reference groups and expanding projects a further Improvement Methodology programme has been requested of the National Improvement Adviser Team.

Appendix 1
Progress of the Work Streams

Numeracy

The Numeracy team have developed a project to target a specific group of children in P2 who have gaps in their learning from Early Level to Level 1 Numeracy. Using Improvement methodology principles, the group has started with a relatively small number of pupils and schools (3 from each LA / 12).

The aim is to upskill staff, and improve confidence in teaching 'Number Talks' as an intervention strategy. The aim is for 80% of identified P2 pupils to be secure at phase 2 (in – house scale) in early number structure by May 2019.

Progress

CLPL training has been undertaken with the pilot team.
A lesson study model has been created and is being used in class.
A collaborative approach with regular meetings of practitioners with the support team is being used.
Practitioners are teamed with each other to provide peer support.
Number walls and daily number talks are being used with pupils.
Team members are acting as mentors for practitioners and visiting schools to support progress.
The team have presented the project to Education Scotland, 22.11.18 (the only RIC team in a group of LAs) who are very interested and positive about the work done so far.

Next steps

A measurement plan has been devised with the support of the RIC Improvement Adviser.
An in-house measure is being applied from a baseline with tracking progress charts being created.
Milestones will be charted and provided as a report.

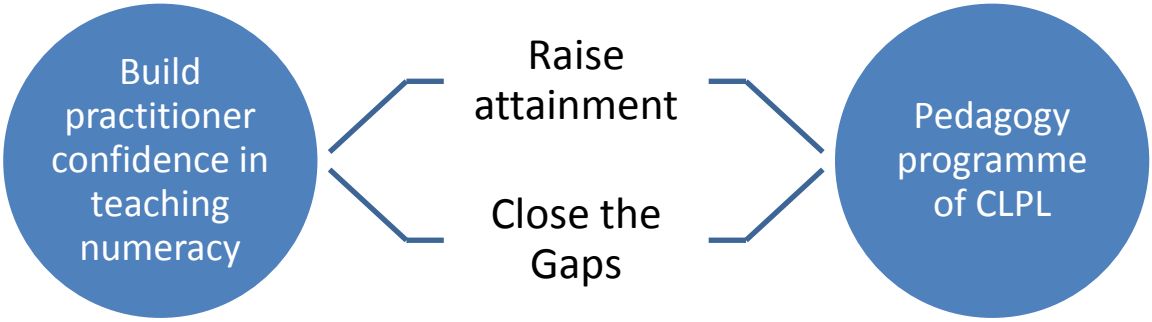
What needs to happen

An agreement with the lead team that the timeline will show significant progress by May 2019.

An upscaling strategy ready to launch with schools across the RIC from May 2019.

With the addition of a full time Numeracy lead, the scope of the Numeracy group will increase (see Evolving RIC).

The main approach will be two pronged:



The starter project will be up-scaled to support improving pedagogy in teaching Numeracy.

This will be complimented by a project to build confidence and a positive mind-set for teachers, pupils and parents in working with numbers.

Evolving RIC (Numeracy & Literacy)

The team need to work with the Performance and Literacy teams to develop the remit of the Data Coaches.

The Ed Psych numeracy projects need to be considered in terms of scope/possible case studies (can go in to the Numeracy blog on the RIC site).

Explore the feasibility of a joint project with FV & WL Colleges to deliver the 'Confidence building'/Mindset aspect of improving numeracy, to support young people who are undertaking foundation apprenticeships.

Map out Maths Strategies from each LA and collaborate on developments.

Literacy

The literacy team's initial aim is to improve reading throughout the BGE and in so doing, support improvement in writing ability. There is a three pronged approach and sub-teams have taken on each project:

1. Directly support practitioners to develop their knowledge, understanding and application of research informed pedagogy which is proven to improve outcomes for children and young people.

2. Develop face to face and digital collaboration between practitioners within and across local authorities and health boards to promote leadership at all levels.

3. Strive to raise attainment for all and close the poverty related attainment gap by supporting reflection on the performance of learners to enable continuous improvement.

Progress

Sub group 1- Have finalised CLPL materials including video materials which will support professional judgement and confidence in CfE levels.

Sub group 2- Developing a reading culture, working with Sarah McGowan from Edinburgh University, establishing reading mentors and ready to launch Blog.

Sub group 3- Developing early vocab, sharing LIFT and intervention strategies which are being exemplified with case studies.

Currently launching through a RIC digital platform.

Next steps

Working with the Communication team to put materials onto the RIC blog.

Working with the RIC improvement adviser to create a measurement plan which details baseline measures and progress milestones: impact of professional learning & impact on pupil progress in reading.

Design a launch event (high profile media coverage).

What needs to happen

With the addition of a full time Literacy lead, the scope of the Literacy group will increase (see Evolving RIC).

This will also involve a two pronged approach which mirrors the numeracy strategy. There is scope with the Literacy confidence building strategy to co-design this with university based researcher input. The aim here would be to build confidence in professional judgement of CfE levels in each of the literacy strands.

Early Learning & Childcare

The initial aim of the ELCC team is to build and sustain quality in learning and teaching for 2 to 3 year olds in early years establishments. The approach is to develop a QA framework and trial in pilot nurseries using the improvement approach which establishes a baseline measure, tracks progress, tests change and then up-scales if successful.

Progress

Pilot establishments identified to undertake test of change in each local authority, these are well underway with a view to evaluate and scale up.

QA framework designed for trial and consultation.

Progress and regular updates provided and shared with the lead team.

Froebel training (play and relationships in learning contexts) being undertaken by some practitioners.

Initial discussions have taken place about sharing VSE models.

Next steps

Preparing case studies of successful implementation.

Organising Inset event for 200 practitioners and lead teams (February 12th 2019) to share progress, case studies and plan to upscale.

Initial group has met to discuss sharing parental engagement strategies, further discussion and planning required.

What needs to happen

Discuss what further themes need to be supported additionally through collaboration in ELCC.

Discuss the scope of the ELCC lead role and use of funding for the work stream lead.

Explore wider collaboration with partners eg. opportunity to consider SEBN and ASN.

CLPL

The initial aim of the team was to map out CLPL across the region and consider how to support school improvement plans by identifying common themes. This identified:

Building leadership

Learning & Teaching- pace and challenge

Evidencing progress in learning

Progress

A combined in-house programme based on the existing CSP model shared across the RIC and led by the 4 CPD co-ordinators.

Symposiums designed to support common themes with input from HMI and work-shops led by teachers from each of the 4 LAs.

The 'Pace & Challenge' symposium was attended in November 2018 by 60 practitioners with an evaluation providing positive and useful feedback.

The 'Evidencing Progress' symposium took place in December 2018 and practitioners were involved in leading sessions along with input from HMIe.

An 'Assessment & Moderation' event took place in December which was co-ordinated by the 4 Assessment Co-ordinators and delivered by Education Scotland.

Next steps

The team are developing a new RIC CLPL programme and are currently working across the other work streams to identify the 'ask and the offer'. This will be informed by an analysis of recent inspection reports that identify common themes for improvement.

What needs to happen

A review of the scope of the work stream.

A consideration of how developing the Curriculum can be supported through this work stream. Discussions are emerging about additional input to develop the STEM Curriculum areas.

Research of quality evidence proven pedagogy programme to continue to improve quality and consistently high standards of learning and teaching.

Planning for a robust programme to support assessment and moderation of CfE.

Consider collaboration between colleges, schools and DYW developments.

Appendix 2

Sharing the FV&WL RIC Plan Phase 2

Activity	Date	LA	Lead
Committee	Aug 18	Falkirk	RN
People Committee Recommendations	30.08	Clackmannanshire	AP
Moving Forward In Learning (MFIL) Steering Group	5.9.18	West Lothian	SM
HT (All)	12.9.18	Falkirk	SM
Secondary HT	12.9.18	West Lothian	SM
Secondary HT	14.9.18	Falkirk	SM
Early Years Team	18.9.18	Stirling	SM
Early Years Business Meet	20.9.18	Stirling	SM
Strategy Launch	25.9.18	Stirling	RN
C&YP Committee	27.9.18	Stirling	KK/SM
PDSP	23.10.18	West Lothian	EC
Secondary HT	2.11.18	Stirling	KK/SM
All HT leadership	8.11.18	West Lothian	SM
WL College	8.11.18	West Lothian	SM
Unison & non teaching reps	Nov 18	Falkirk	RN/SM
Secondary HT	14.11.18	West Lothian	SM
ADES Annual Conference	16.11.18	RIC	RN/SM/JE
EY Business meeting	20.11.18	Stirling	SM
HT meeting	27.11.18	Clackmannanshire	SM
Secondary HT Reference Group	29.11.18	RIC	SM
CEO/Leaders meeting	30.11.18	RIC	Directors & SM
SEBN meet	30.11.18	RIC	SM
Team managers meeting	3.12.18	Falkirk	SM
Primary HT Reference Group	10.12.18	RIC	SM
Principal Ed Psychs	11.12.18	RIC	SM
Attainment Advisers	9.1.19	RIC	SM

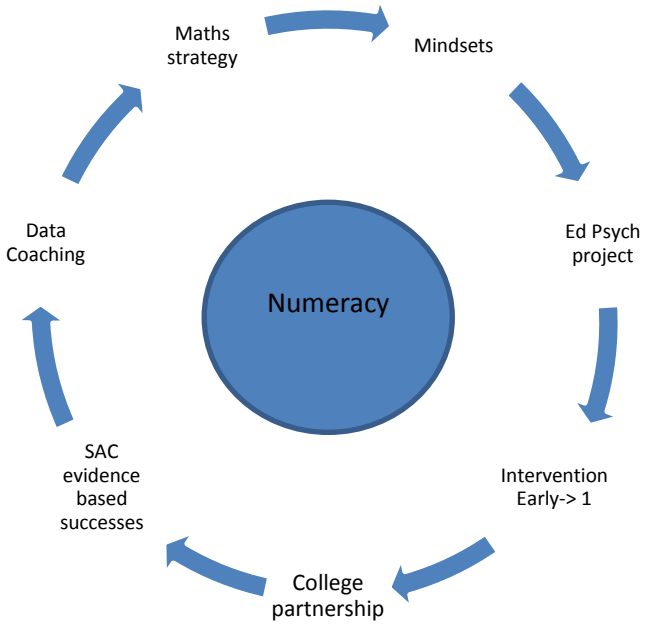
Forthcoming Events

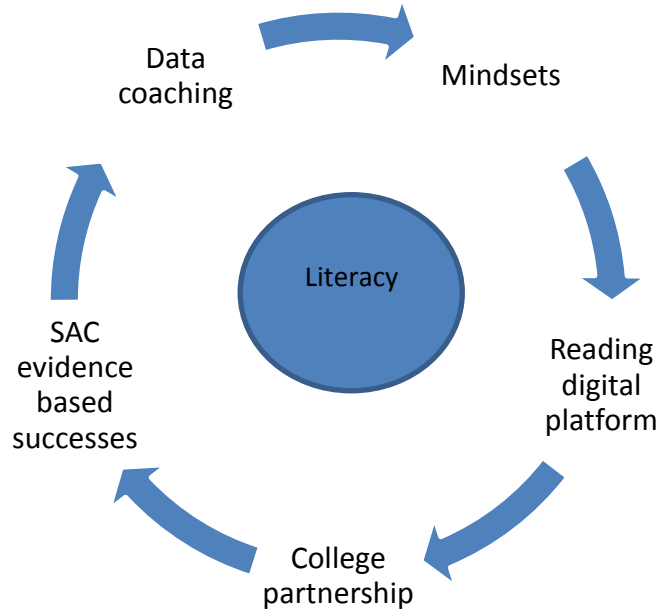
Activity	Date	LA	Lead
Consult Evaluation	12.2.19	RIC	SM

FV College	TBA	Forth Valley	SM
CLD	TBA	RIC	SM
Parent Council Chairs	TBA	Each LA	SM
Stirling University	TBA	RIC	RIC leads/SM

Appendix 3

Evolving RIC Ideas

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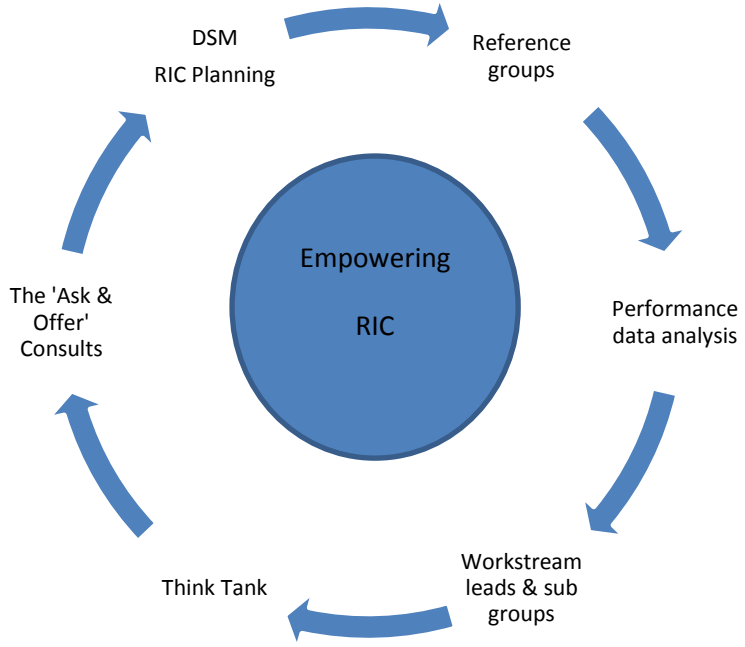
Mindsets
Literacy
Reading digital platform
College partnership
SAC evidence based successes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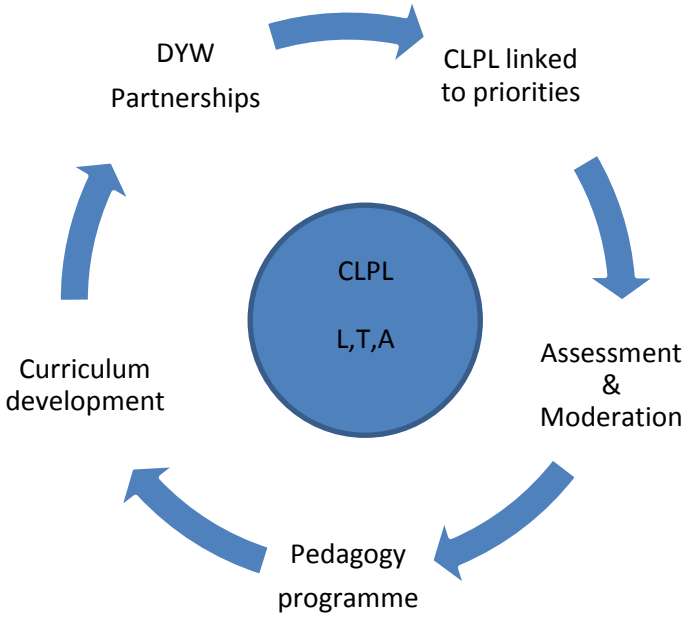
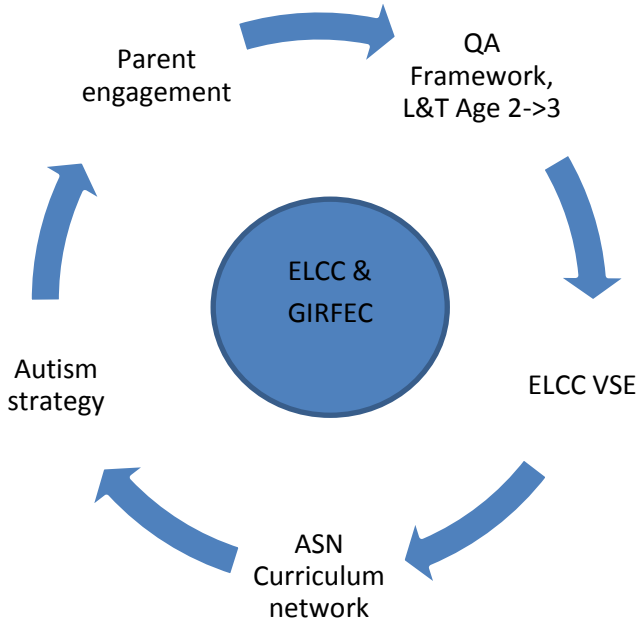
RIC Planning
Reference groups
Empowering
RIC
Performance data analysis
Workstream leads & sub groups
Think Tank
The 'Ask & Offer' Consults


DYW
Partnerships
CLPL linked
to priorities
CLPL
L,T,A
Assessment
&
Moderation
Curriculum
development
Pedagogy
programme


Parent
engagement
QA
Framework,
L&T Age 2->3
ELCC &
GIRFEC
ELCC VSE
Autism
strategy
ASN
Curriculum
network

Education Scotland
Foghlam Alba

Thematic Inspection of Readiness for Empowerment

December 2018

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Foreword

Together we can achieve change quicker and better than working alone. That has been a key theme of the Joint Agreement between Scotland's stakeholders in education, the School Empowerment Steering Group. That progress takes a further step forward with publication of this report.

Part of Education Scotland's role is to carry out three national thematic inspections that will gather evidence on school empowerment. Each thematic inspection will be looking at different themes: readiness for empowerment; curriculum leadership; and parent and pupil participation.

This report draws together the findings from the first of thematic inspection Readiness for Empowerment that took place in the Autumn term 2018.

I am encouraged that the evidence gathered by HM Inspectors shows the positive steps already being taken on the journey towards empowerment and the ways in which different local authorities have embraced the principles set out in the Joint Agreement.

It is evident that a high level of professional commitment to collaboration and co-production exists across Scottish education in order to improve outcomes for children and young people.

This is exemplified by the many strengths highlighted in this report along with examples of practice and comments from leaders and practitioners about the positive impact that empowerment can bring.

Our findings also show clearly that, as expected, there is still more to be done to realise our collective ambition of an empowered, collaborative system. As we move along our journey of empowerment there is a careful balance to be struck between providing the right amount of governance and accountability while at the same time allowing leaders and practitioners flexibility and autonomy to meet their pupils' needs.

Care also needs to be taken to avoid creating unnecessary bureaucracy which draws leaders and practitioners away from focusing on decisions which will have the greatest impact on delivering consistently high-quality learning.

Additionally, we need to ensure school leadership is released to focus on learning – and that other system changes do not detract from this central aim.

I hope national partners, local authorities and schools can benefit from our findings and collectively can use them to support their efforts.

The two remaining national thematic reviews will be published in 2019 and will add to the evidence base and progress being made to ensure an empowered education system.

Gayle Gorman
HM Chief Inspector of Education

Introduction

The Education Reform – Joint Agreement published in June 2018 sets out the collective agreement by a commissioning group including the Scottish Government, COSLA, SOLACE, ADES and Education Scotland:

> **Improving the education and life chances of our children and young people is the defining mission of our Scottish education system. Our shared ambition is to close the unacceptable gap in attainment between our least and most disadvantaged children and to raise attainment for all. We are clear that our vision of excellence and equity cannot be achieved by one part of the system alone; all partners must work together in a collegiate and collaborative way, keeping the interests of children and young people front and centre. Empowered, responsible and collaborative schools are an important part of our shared vision for Scottish education.**

The Joint Agreement sets out agreed principles and enablers and measures that will support and encourage the empowerment of schools in Scotland. These include the commitment that Education Scotland would carry out three inspections in the 2018-19 academic year looking at the following themes: Readiness for Empowerment; Curriculum Leadership; and Parent and Pupil Participation.

This report provides the findings related to the first of these thematic inspections on Readiness for Empowerment.

Scope of the Readiness for Empowerment thematic inspection

Over the period September to November 2018, Education Scotland visited all 32 local authorities. During their visits, the Education Scotland teams met with focus groups, including local authority staff, groups of headteachers from primary, secondary and special schools, groups of promoted and unpromoted teachers, professional associations and other stakeholders proposed by the local authority and looked at relevant documentation.

Evidence was gathered for each of the following areas:

1. **Improvement:** How well do local authorities empower headteachers and schools to lead improvement in order to close the poverty-related attainment gap through school improvement planning in collaboration with their school community?
2. **Curriculum:** How well do local authorities empower headteachers and schools to design their local curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence and in collaboration with their school community?
3. **Staffing:** How well do local authorities provide headteachers with flexibility to make decisions about staffing and leadership structures in their schools?
4. **Funding:** How well do local authorities empower headteachers to decide how funding allocated to their schools for the delivery of school education is spent?

Local authorities visited were asked to complete a self-evaluation of their readiness for empowerment and to provide evidence against each of the four categories above. This was used as a starting point for gathering evidence for the thematic inspection.

Education Scotland's findings are summarised in the remainder of this report under the four headings above. In each section an overarching narrative, key messages, information on evidence from the thematic inspection visits together with views from participants and illustrations of practice are provided.

Participants in the thematic inspection

Number (approx.)	Participants
300	Local authority – central staff
200	Primary headteachers
170	Secondary headteachers
180	Primary teachers
180	Secondary teachers
130	Professional associations representatives
160	Stakeholders
1,320	Total

Thematic inspection findings

1. **Improvement:** How well do local authorities empower headteachers and schools to lead improvement in order to close the poverty-related attainment gap through school improvement planning in collaboration with their school community?

While at different stages, almost all local authorities are committed to developing an empowered education system with the aim of improving outcomes for learners, reducing inequalities and closing the attainment gap. Local authority staff provide flexible structures and support to build capacity and enable empowerment of schools in relation to improvement. These include promoting and supporting collaboration, professional learning, leadership development, and supporting evidence-based self-evaluation for improvement. This is allowing headteachers to increasingly take more responsibility and ownership and to be accountable for their actions in the context of their own schools. It would now be helpful to support everyone in the system to develop a shared understanding of what empowerment means for them and the potential benefits for learners.

Key messages

- Local authorities provide flexible structures of guidance, ways of working and support to build capacity and enable empowerment of schools. As a result, headteachers have the autonomy, freedom and responsibility to lead improvement in their own schools. They value the guidance, support and challenge from local authority staff.
- Further work is required to more consistently develop a culture of collective decision-making between local authority staff and headteachers to further empower headteachers as collective leaders.
- Improvement planning processes are now more streamlined than previously and the balance between national and local priorities and those identified from individual school's self-evaluation evidence is better.
- Professional learning, leadership development and access to an increasing range of qualitative and quantitative data are enabling empowerment of headteachers and staff to bring about improvement in their schools.
- Collaboration within and across schools is an increasing feature of practice across local authorities. Local authorities and schools need to build on this positive work. This will help to ensure those involved have a clear understanding of the purpose and focus and are able to demonstrate improvements in learning, teaching, and outcomes for learners as a result of their collaboration.

Responsibility within flexible frameworks of guidance, ways of working and support

Headteachers[1] in most local authorities have the responsibility and freedom to lead improvement in their own schools. Local authorities provide a range of flexible frameworks and guidance to support improvement planning processes. Headteachers in the majority of local authorities value the guidance, support and challenge from the central team in empowering them to lead improvement. In those authorities where headteachers regard themselves as collective leaders within a collegiate partnership with the local authority, support and challenge from their peers gives them the confidence to take forward changes in their own schools.

A culture of collaborative decision-making between authority staff and headteachers is a key enabler for schools to be empowered to influence direction and drive improvement in their local context. This degree of empowerment for headteachers needs to be further developed more consistently across local authorities.

Taking account of local and National Improvement Framework priorities and reducing unnecessary bureaucracy

All local authorities have been developing improvement planning to streamline their approaches. Headteachers and teachers in almost all local authorities agree that this has resulted in the processes being more manageable and has reduced unnecessary bureaucracy.

Headteachers in most local authorities agree that the balance between national and local priorities alongside those identified by their own school's self-evaluation are appropriate and well-judged. Teachers in the majority of local authorities feel empowered to lead improvements in their schools supported by frameworks of guidance and clear expectations. Headteachers and teachers in a few local authorities identified barriers to empowerment in leading improvement in schools related to workload and conflicting advice from national and local bodies. There is scope to involve teachers and professional associations further in discussions about what empowerment means and the potential benefits for learners.

Professional learning and leadership development to enable school improvement

In most local authorities, a range of school level, local and national professional learning opportunities is supporting headteachers and teachers in driving forward improvements in their schools. Common areas of focus include improvement methodologies, learning and teaching, self-evaluation, use of data to support improvement and understanding the poverty-related attainment gap. Developing leadership capacity at all levels to take forward improvements is a key focus in most local authorities. This includes staff accessing national and local leadership development programmes as well as taking on leadership roles such as leaders of learning, literacy, numeracy and STEM champions within and across schools. As a result, headteachers and teachers in most local authorities report that they are gaining confidence, and increasingly motivated to take forward improvements.

1 Throughout this report references to headteachers, teachers and others relate to those who participated in this thematic inspection.

Using a range of data and evidence to determine school priorities

Most local authorities have an increasing focus on supporting schools in using a range of data and evidence. This is helping them determine key priorities for improvement which focus on the needs of learners and reducing inequalities of outcomes. Headteachers and teachers agree that data provided by their local authority is supporting them well in their school self-evaluation. They welcome the accessible presentation of data and feel that this supports them in developing a shared understanding of priorities within their school communities. Teachers, especially primary teachers, are becoming more confident in analysing data. They report that this helps them understand better the attainment gaps in their schools and choose suitable interventions to support improving attainment.

Collaboration across the school community to support improvement

Staff in almost all local authorities have a range of opportunities to collaborate within and across schools through networks, working groups, school improvement partnerships, clusters and families of schools. These allow staff to share practice, knowledge, skills, experience and evidence of what works within their schools' contexts to varying effect. In around a third of local authorities, this is leading to agreeing common local priorities. Around a quarter of local authorities identified that developing collegiate professional enquiry approaches is supporting schools in working together in solution-oriented ways to lead improvements. This is helping ensure that those involved have a shared commitment to improvement priorities identified, building on a research evidence base and focusing on bringing about changes in learning and teaching. Staff in a few local authorities identified that constraints of time and workload can limit the impact of collaboration and access to opportunities for professional learning. Further work is required to ensure that those involved in collaboration have a shared understanding of the purpose and focus and are able to demonstrate the impact on improving learning and teaching and outcomes for learners as a result of their collaboration.

Using qualitative and quantitative measures of success to monitor and evaluate progress

Local authorities and schools are continuing to develop approaches to self-evaluation for improvement and using an increasing range of qualitative and quantitative data to monitor and evaluate progress. This includes performance data, evidence from evaluation of quality indicators and stakeholders' views. Increasing opportunities for a range of stakeholders, including learners, parents, partners and the wider community, to participate and engage in improvement planning is a key priority for schools in the majority of local authorities. In around a quarter of local authorities, staff are developing how they use evidence from research to inform measures of success and to evaluate the impact of their work. In the majority of local authorities, staff are focusing more on evidencing impact and improving outcomes for learners. Teachers in the majority of local authorities feel they have the responsibility and ownership of improvement priorities in their own school. They are clear that they need to provide a range of evidence of improvements related to improving attainment and outcomes for learners. Further work is required to improve the focus on the use of a range of evidence to evaluate the progress in bringing about improvements.

Headteachers' views on improvement

'The local and national agendas are more dovetailed. Everything fits better now. We have freedom to apply our own strategies within our own schools.'

'It is refreshing to set out our own priorities and no-one will meddle with our plan. I am trusted to know what is right for my school.'

'There is real momentum with leadership in this local authority. We can talk from personal experience about how the leadership programme has helped us grow as system leaders. Its main impact is on pedagogy.'

'We have a flexible framework and structure to lean on in driving forward improvement; empowerment within a structure.'

'We have both accountability and autonomy within a supportive structure.'

'We are very lucky. The Director's vision is very strong in the empowerment agenda. We don't have to ask permission, but we have the framework of support from the authority. The authority has this just right.'

'Our collaboratives are very empowering. We do focused collaborative reviews of each other's schools. This is great professional learning.'

'The focus, rigour and aspiration are super. The passion is there because it is relevant to our school.'

Teachers' views on improvement

'Access to the university modules to support self-evaluation, learning and teaching has been good. As a result, we have used our data to highlight what is making the biggest impact and what are our areas of concern.'

'As practitioners we are shaping how leadership and empowerment are being developed across the authority. We are not constrained but supported.'

'Empowerment means being able to take decisions that are right for your school and community whilst having support, a team that has your back.'

'It feels good to be able to suggest ideas that are right for your pupils. I know as long as I can back up my idea I'll be supported to try it out.'

'Our plan comes from the bottom up. Our own department priorities and teachers' professional learning needs to feed into the faculty plan and the overall strategic plan. That way we can take forward key projects.'

'There are many opportunities for young people to be empowered and lead change. There are clear strategies in our improvement plans. Pupil voice is really important in our school.'

'Self-evaluation is planned much better and this is helping the improvement plan. Strategic priorities are more consistent but the tasks can change.'

'As a result of professional learning, empowered school assistants deliver professional learning on effective interventions to other schools. Now they have created their own network.'

Illustrations of practice related to improvement

The local authority actively encourages and facilitates open dialogue about the philosophy of empowerment. The central team believe their role as an education authority is to bring about strategic purpose and direction. They demonstrate that empowerment underpins their work. An empowering common moral purpose that exists across education services is fundamental to the values base that permeates their schools. The local authority believes this enabler is guiding officers, headteachers and schools to take appropriate actions that will lead to greater excellence and equity.

The range and quality of professional learning and the highly-valued leadership programmes provided by the authority are empowering staff at all levels. Staff have benefited from professional learning which they report has made a positive impact on children and young people. Of particular note is the 'Aspiring Principal Teacher' programme which has empowered teachers to take time to focus on the craft of teaching and learning and to lead improvement in their schools. The 'Step Back' headteacher programme has further developed leadership skills and skills in coaching to support their peers. This approach is continued through the headteacher leadership and professional learning days to further support knowledge and understanding of evidenced-based approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

The local authority has a very wide range of data available to evaluate its work and is interrogating this in increasingly sophisticated and rigorous ways. It is presenting attainment and contextual data to schools in ever more accessible ways. Annual data packs are used by headteachers and senior managers as starting points to identify vulnerable groups and to deploy support and strategies accordingly. Data analysis is supported by school data coaches and authority workshops.

Thematic inspection findings

2. Curriculum: How well do local authorities empower headteachers and schools to design their local curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence and in collaboration with their school community?

Headteachers and schools are embracing empowerment to design and deliver a curriculum which meets their own school's local context. They are supported by a range of policies, guidance, curriculum frameworks and shared resources. The full benefits of this empowerment have yet to be realised in practice. Improving the curriculum is a work in progress with developing partnerships being key to improving the curriculum offer. There is now a need to further enable schools and teachers to take the initiative and be creative and innovative in developing and delivering a curriculum to meet local needs. The school community needs to be more actively engaged in designing the local curriculum and in its evaluation.

Key messages

- Improving the curriculum continues to be a high priority for schools across local authorities. Developing their curriculum rationale with the school community has helped develop a shared understanding of their unique local context.
- Developing partnerships with colleges, employers, community learning and development services (CLD) and third sector organisations to enhance the curriculum offer continues to be a key focus for schools. These are supporting schools in designing curriculum interventions to tackle inequity of outcomes and increasing the range of progression pathways, especially in the senior phase.
- Schools need to take full advantage of curriculum flexibility to continue to improve progression through the broad general education (BGE) especially at points of transition from primary to secondary and from the BGE to the senior phase to reflect their individual school context and learners' needs and interests.
- Further work is required to maximise the potential impact of the support offered by the local authority Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers (QAMSOs) across local authorities.

Policies and practice promoting empowerment to design and deliver a curriculum which meets a school's local context

All local authorities have a wide range of policies and guidance to support schools in designing their curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence. As a result, headteachers in almost all local authorities are empowered to design and deliver a curriculum which meets their own school's local needs. In half of local authorities, teachers are also empowered to initiate and lead on the curriculum. In the majority of local authorities, the collaborative, co-production of flexible curriculum frameworks, guidance and shared resources are key to enabling empowerment.

Headteachers and teachers feel these resources support consistency and planning for progression in learning while allowing them to adapt their approaches to meet their learners' needs and interests. Headteachers and teachers in a minority of local authorities, feel that their empowerment is limited by pressure of workload and too many priorities to deliver through the curriculum. Headteachers and teachers in a few local authorities feel that they are constrained by national expectations about the curriculum.

Engaging the school community in designing and evaluating the curriculum

Almost all local authorities have clear expectations that schools will design and evaluate their curriculum in collaboration with the school community. In the majority of local authorities, schools are working with staff, learners, parents and partners to develop a curriculum rationale tailored to their own school context. This is helping develop a shared understanding of their unique local context and needs, and of the interests of their children and young people. Schools in around half of local authorities are prioritising improving ways they involve parents in developing the curriculum and around a third are increasingly involving children and young people. Further work is required to ensure parents, learners and partners are more actively engaged in designing the local curriculum and in its evaluation.

Providing flexible learning pathways to support different needs of learners and raise attainment

Across all local authorities, the curriculum in schools is under constant review and development. Headteachers and teachers agree that there is a need to continue to improve progression through the BGE especially at points of transition from primary to secondary and from the BGE to the senior phase. In around half of local authorities, schools are increasingly using a range of data such as attainment information, Skills Development Scotland 16+ data on post-school destinations as well as local labour market information to review and inform curriculum development. In the majority of local authorities, schools are developing partnerships with colleges, employers, CLD and third sector organisations to enhance their curriculum offer.

In most local authorities, schools have a focus on developing flexible pathways to meet the different needs of learners. In primary schools, this includes improving personalisation and choice, using the local environment as contexts for learning, developing play-based approaches and supporting family learning. Secondary schools seek ways of providing a wider range of courses in the senior phase at different levels to meet the different needs and interests of young people and to support progression. Taking forward the Developing the Young Workforce agenda and understanding the employability skills required for the local context is an increasing priority. Improving the range of vocational pathways and providing Foundation Apprenticeships is seen as key to this. Schools in the majority of local authorities are designing curriculum interventions to tackle inequity of outcomes. Common areas of priority include interventions related to literacy, numeracy, STEM, nurture, and social, emotional and mental wellbeing. Schools in a minority of local authorities are developing the use of digital technology and E-learning as ways of increasing the range of flexible progression pathways to meet learners' needs. Teachers now need to be further enabled to take the initiative and be creative and innovative in developing and delivering a curriculum to meet local needs.

Headteachers and teachers in a minority of local authorities report that assessment and moderation activities are building capacity and supporting curriculum planning. Further work is required to maximise the potential impact of the support offered to help improve assessment and moderation, including the Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers (QAMSOs) across local authorities. Increasing the range of collaborative moderation activities is an important way to empower staff in planning curriculum progression and interventions.

Headteachers' views on curriculum

'We are now stopping talking about the model of the curriculum and focusing on planning learning pathways that meet young people's needs, provide progression and support positive destinations.'

'The local authority does not prescribe a model for the broad, general education but I am accountable for ensuring that my young people receive all of their entitlements.'

'Partnership, authority support and autonomy enable us to deliver flexible pathways.'

'We are empowered by our Director's vision for headteacher autonomy in the curriculum A great degree of trust has been placed in us and we accept that and are responsible as a result.'

'The authority adds tremendous value to our work in the curriculum. We worry that it won't be sustained. We feel very supported.'

'The partnerships we have established have supported us to go beyond what is traditional for young people. Members of the Central Team support and challenge us to ensure our focus is clear and is bringing about equity.'

'Cross-school collaboration in cluster groups on curriculum planning has helped free up teachers' time to focus on delivering the curriculum in ways that meet pupils' needs.'

Teachers' views on curriculum

'Curriculum design is spectacular in our area because we have a belief in what our children and community need.'

'Self-evaluation gives us confidence in what we are doing with the curriculum. We use national guidance and set goals for ourselves and our pedagogy. We make sure it is right for our children and community.'

'Schools are looking at other schools with similar issues. We are working much more with partners to widen options. Our senior phase model is under review. We are doing a big consultation with staff and young people and families.'

'Teachers are embracing working with the community. Children do not see pathways but they see things they want to learn about. We look for the best person to do the job.'

'Headteachers are putting the power back to the class teachers regarding the curriculum. Headteachers know that we are the ones who deliver and trust us to do this.'

'As an authority we are much better at using data. It has made us think. We are more empowered because we know our young people so much better. We can make good decisions with them about the transition from BGE through to senior phase. We have the autonomy to meet their needs.'

Illustrations of practice related to improvement

The E-Learning project continues to grow from strength to strength. It empowers headteachers and whole communities to benefit equitably from a much broader curriculum than might have been offered, particularly in smaller schools. Both primary and secondary schools across the authority benefit from E-Learning. Several local authorities across Scotland now provide courses through the authority E-Learning programme. The continued educational needs of young people and adults who have temporarily or permanently left the authority have been met through E-Learning. Some young people maintain important aspects of their Gaelic Medium Education as a result of E-Learning courses delivered from for example, Malaga, Spain.

The authority has had a rich debate over many years about approaches to curriculum development and delivery. Headteachers are now very satisfied with the extent to which the authority empowers them to structure and deliver progressive learner pathways, which take account of their local geography, economic infrastructure and demographics. The authority has collaborated very well with headteachers to develop a framework to support their thinking. As a result, a range of support materials are available which make expectations clear. Sound arrangements are in place for central officers and peer headteachers to support and challenge each other's thinking in relation to curriculum development and delivery.

Schools work at cluster level to undertake joint planning. An outstanding, but not isolated, example is the Cluster Science project which is particularly aimed at involving families in STEM subjects. The project involves all schools, including family centres, and works with local businesses, parents and partners. Transport to the school is provided so that all interested families can attend. Other award-winning projects that involve the community in the design and evaluation of the curriculum include reading projects and family learning.

Thematic inspection findings

3. Staffing: How well do local authorities provide headteachers with flexibility to make decisions about staffing and leadership structures in their schools?

Headteachers have varying degrees of flexibility to make decisions about staffing and leadership structures in their schools. Further improvement is needed in the consistency of how headteachers and schools are empowered in relation to staffing. Their key focus needs to be on leading school improvements and being leaders of learning and the curriculum. Staffing shortages need to be addressed to ensure these do not limit empowerment of schools.

Key messages

- Where there are staffing shortages, these are barriers to empowerment. They limit opportunities for collaboration for improvement, access to professional learning and the provision of flexible pathways in the curriculum.
- Headteachers are empowered to varying degrees in relation to recruiting staff. Further consistency is required to achieve the right balance between having flexibility in teacher appointments and support from the local authority to minimise workload.
- Schools welcome the additional flexibility that Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) has given them to create a range of posts, including promoted posts, targeted at particular needs in their schools.
- Headteachers value collegiate approaches with the local authority to addressing a range of staffing issues and indicate that this support is crucial to their protection and empowerment in relation to staffing.

Involvement in recruitment processes

The majority of local authorities have clear, effective and transparent processes and procedures for recruiting school staff. Difficulties with recruitment of staff is a concern in the majority of local authorities and this is regarded as a national issue. Staffing shortages are considered barriers to empowerment in that they limit opportunities for collaboration for improvement, access to professional learning and the provision of flexible pathways in the curriculum. A minority of local authorities are taking positive action to address staffing issues in line with their local needs. This includes consolidation of part-time or temporary vacancies to full-time positions, relocation packages, 'grow your own' approaches such as supporting sponsorships for Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) qualifications and return to work opportunities. A few local authorities share staff across schools, for example to address shortages in areas of specialism.

Local authorities have a range of approaches in place, such as an annual recruitment exercise for unpromoted posts, to support schools in filling vacancies. This aims to ensure economies of scale in advertising, recruitment and selection of staff. In most local authorities, headteachers play a direct role in the recruitment

process. In around half of local authorities, headteachers feel there is the right balance between headteachers having flexibility in teacher appointments and support from the local authority to minimise workload and bureaucracy. However, headteachers in around half of local authorities are concerned about workload associated with recruitment and find processes slow and time-consuming. Around half of local authorities highlighted the positive relationships and contributions of professional associations in developing recruitment and other staffing policies and processes.

Headteachers in the majority of local authorities feel well-empowered in relation to recruitment of staff. Headteachers in a minority want to be able to appoint staff with the skills and experience more suited to their school. In around half of local authorities, headteachers are responsible for the advertising, recruitment and selection of promoted posts. Primary headteachers in a few local authorities do not feel sufficiently empowered in relation to staffing and feel that they are not engaged in recruitment as much as secondary headteachers.

Flexibility in staffing and leadership structures

Headteachers in the majority of local authorities have sufficient flexibility in staffing and leadership structures to meet the needs of their school. Local authorities have a range of ways to support schools in decisions about staffing. These include management points systems or formulae based on criteria such as school budgets, rolls and deprivation. Headteachers in a minority of local authorities feel that the processes to bring about changes in staffing and leadership structures bureaucratic and time-consuming. Headteachers in schools with PEF have valued the flexibility to create a range of posts targeted at particular needs in their schools. This has enabled them to create additional promoted posts and posts with responsibilities related to for example, raising attainment, supporting transitions, nurture, equality and inclusion and to involve a wider range of staff such as family support workers, counsellors and school-based social workers.

Roles and responsibilities in developing and sustaining a professional school team

Local authorities have a range of policies and supportive guidance in place that clearly outline roles and responsibilities in relation to developing and sustaining a professional school team. Headteachers in the majority of local authorities value the quality advice and guidance from Human Resource (HR) professionals from the local authority. They appreciate the collegiate approach with the local authority to staffing including staff recruitment exercises, grievance, disciplinary, occupational health support, workload and working time agreements and supporting professional learning. Headteachers indicate that support from HR specialists is crucial to ensure they work within employment law and other statutory requirements. Headteachers in a few local authorities explicitly stated that they do not want any further empowerment in relation to staffing since they want to focus on improving their school, learning, teaching and the curriculum.

Headteachers' views on staffing

'We have got the right balance here. The mix of individual autonomy and collective responsibility, together with strong HR support is working for us.'

'It's annoying when local authority pupil support teachers get pulled from your schools because of staff absences; but we understand it is part of being part of the collective and that we work together for all of the authority's children rather than just for our own schools. It's part of our moral compass.'

'We don't want empowerment to be about more admin. We need quality HR support so we can focus on the curriculum and improvement.'

'Recruitment is clear. I have access to my own HR Advisor and have quality, instant support. I get the same consistent advice and the 'human element'.'

'Parents expressed a view that they want their headteachers to lead schools, not do HR. I would find it extremely challenging to do my job if these services were taken away.'

'The large recruitment exercise works well. Headteachers can go on the panels if they have a vacancy. There is always discussion about the 'right fit' for your school. HR are always very keen to have these discussions.'

Teachers' views on staffing

'Additional staffing enables us to work more directly with our families in different ways. This is taking our impact way beyond schools now.'

'We need to understand when our colleagues need support in challenging situations. The central team organised training to help us be the best mentors and coaches we can be.'

'Teachers are empowered to lead on staffing too. Headteachers are more empowered than ever to use the staff they have, especially across the partnerships.'

'Tricky situation with staff. We have to beg, borrow and steal. It is not always possible to get any supply cover and so some development days for particular staff cannot always happen. People pick up the slack because they have to.'

'Headteachers value the wellbeing of staff and have invested in them through approaches such as mindfulness to keep their staff well.'

Illustrations of practice related to staffing

A key enabler to the empowerment of headteachers in relation to staffing is the high-quality advice and guidance provided by trusted HR professionals with a deep knowledge of education policy. Headteachers highly value the support they receive in relation to local and national conditions of service, alignment of promoted posts to appropriate remits and job-sizing to ensure equity and avoid equal pay claims. Headteachers are very positive about the clear processes and procedures in place to support the employment and wellbeing of staff. Where intervention is needed, it is done at the earliest stage possible. HR support extends well beyond recruitment processes. HR professionals are highly-effective in applying their expertise to promote and uphold professional standards, including through provision of professional learning. The HR team has developed strong professional networks, for example, in developing bespoke arrangements with a university to address a shortage of drama teachers

The local authority has been proactive in taking forward a number of initiatives to increase the workforce. This includes training for returning teachers who have had a career break and opportunities through the 'Career Change Programme', which gives employees of the local authority an opportunity to retrain as a teacher. Distance learning opportunities are offered in partnership with universities. The local authority has recruited agency staff to target recruitment in remote areas. It has also looked globally and has successfully recruited sixteen teachers from Canada who have made a commitment to work in the local authority for at least one year.

Locality forums for additional support needs (ASN) have recently been introduced and are being piloted in one cluster. This allows resources to support children's ASN to be shared across a locality and gives a degree of flexibility to the allocations of support staff, depending on changing levels of need. Headteachers spoke very positively about this development, highlighting the authority's very enabling culture of collaboration and sharing.

Thematic inspection findings

4. **Funding:** How well do local authorities empower headteachers to decide how funding allocated to their schools for the delivery of school education is spent?

Headteachers have varying degrees of flexibility to make decisions about funding. Greater consistency is needed in the empowerment of headteachers and schools in relation to funding. This needs to ensure their key focus is on leading school improvements and being leaders of learning and the curriculum.

Key messages

- Overall, headteachers are supported well with a range of financial management information and guidance. Support and challenge from the local authority in relation to how funding is spent is appropriate.
- Support from local authority finance officers and business managers is crucial to empowering headteachers in making decisions about how their funding is spent.
- Some headteachers have concerns about the constraints of procurement processes but others understand that these procedures protect schools in a range of ways.
- Further work is required to ensure that staff, parents and learners are more involved in decisions about how funding is spent.
- Headteachers identified council budget efficiencies and not being sufficiently involved in decisions about how efficiency savings can be made within their schools as barriers to empowerment.

Flexibility available to senior managers on finance

Headteachers in the majority of local authorities feel sufficiently empowered in relation to deciding how funding allocated to their schools for the delivery of education is spent. They have freedom in decisions about their devolved school budgets and day-to-day running of their schools. They feel they have the right level of support and challenge from the local authority in relation to how funding is spent. Headteachers in around a half of these local authorities explicitly stated that they do not want more responsibilities in relation to funding since they feel this would prevent them from focusing on leading school improvements and being leaders of learning and the curriculum. Headteachers in a minority of local authorities want to be more empowered in relation to funding. Barriers to empowerment in relation to funding include council budget efficiencies and not being sufficiently involved in decisions about how efficiency savings can be made within their schools. Headteachers from a few local authorities indicated that they are having to rely increasingly on fundraising and sponsorship from businesses and partners.

Support for financial management processes

Headteachers from most local authorities highlighted the support from local authority finance officers and business managers as being crucial to empowering them in making decisions about how their funding is spent. They are supported well with a range of financial management information and guidance. Headteachers in around half of local authorities highlighted the good quality of support and guidance they received from the local authority about using PEF allocations. This enabled them to make the right decisions for their schools.

Those with access to business managers, sometimes located in schools, are highly appreciative of the support they receive in relation to budgeting, staffing, health and safety and procurement. Headteachers in a few local authorities indicated that they now have less access to business managers as they are located centrally or responsible for clusters rather than just secondary schools. This is resulting in workload issues for headteachers. Concerns about constraints of procurement processes were raised in around a third of local authorities. However, in around a quarter of local authorities, headteachers understand that procurement procedures protects them in a range of ways. Headteachers in a minority of local authorities are concerned about too much of their time being spent on administration related to funding. A few would like more regular and more detailed budgetary information to enable them to make financial decisions more timeously. Further work is required to ensure that staff, parents and learners are more involved in decisions about how funding is spent.

Headteachers' views on funding

'There could be unintended consequences of having more autonomy in that we would not be protected by being part of the big team.'

'We don't want empowerment related to finance to mean that we get everything to do. Without the right support from the local authority, we would focus more on admin rather than leadership of education.'

'We have confidence that we can be creative in how we spend our budget linked to our school improvement plan; we also have strong accountability linked to leading improvements in pupil progress – we revisit our impact statement regularly.'

'I have so little money left to improve the school that I find it difficult to empower staff to make the changes we need to make.'

'We have not yet been involved in strategic discussions about what empowerment means in relation to staffing and funding and how accountability ties in with that.'

'The infrastructure around finance has improved. There is more scrutiny and more support. It is great to meet finance staff face-to-face on a regular basis and the Education Group meetings have finance on the agenda each time.'

Teachers' views on funding

'There are many procedures that we do not understand. There is heavy bureaucracy and they can be tricky. But we know why these are needed.'

'The authority do very well to empower schools to decide how to use their own budgets and get the best from it.'

'We have full autonomy to spend our PEF money but we are accountable. Interventions that work are still in place, others have been dropped.'

'We are a 'jack of all trades' filling in grant forms to secure additional funding. If we are to support the next generation we should not have to spend hours of our own time fighting for money through applying for grants.'

Illustrations of practice related to funding

A tool available to schools provides headteachers with the opportunity to place annual revenue funding into council reserves. This allows planning for larger areas of investment in the future to meet the needs of the school. This tool enables headteachers to essentially ‘save up’ for the purpose of defraying expenditure to be incurred from time-to-time in repairing, maintaining and renewing any buildings, works, equipment or articles belonging to the school. This allows resources to be more efficiently managed and offer greater flexibility and control of budget at a local level within the principles of the scheme.

Given levels of flexibility within staffing budgets, headteachers are able to make local decisions on how best to utilise the budget associated with the approved staffing model for their school. Using virement and carry-forward facilities, headteachers can decide locally on the most effective use of all devolved budget lines, subject to financial/HR procedures and policies. This also applies to managed/efficiency savings targets which each establishment has to meet each year in order to contribute to the overall saving requirement of the department/council.

Readiness for empowerment overall findings

Empowered, responsible and collaborative schools are an important part of the shared vision for Scottish education in delivering excellence and equity for all. The evidence from this thematic inspection on Readiness for Empowerment indicates that local authorities, while at different stages, are implementing a range of strategies and approaches to develop an empowered education system.

The following dimensions of empowerment are emerging as features of practice within and across Scottish schools.

Dimensions of Empowerment

Autonomy:	having permissions and freedom to take the initiative and be creative and innovative in meeting the needs of learners and individual school's context within a flexible framework of delegated leadership responsibilities.
Professional learning:	enabled through engaging in career-long professional learning which challenges thinking, develops skills of enquiry and criticality, promotes collaborative practices and impacts on learning of children, young people and adults.
Participation and engagement:	involvement in, and ownership of, evidence-based decision-making about the life and work of the school built through consensus.
Collaboration:	engaging in co-production, solution-orientated activities to deliver and improve education and achieve collective goals and aspirations for learners and schools.
Resources:	having access to skills, information, guidance, tools and resources to bring about improvement to school practices and performance.
Impact:	being responsible, trusted and accountable for actions leading to improved outcomes for learners.

These dimensions of empowerment are important levers for change to support further discussions and developing further empowerment of headteachers and schools. They can apply at all the different levels of the education system to ensure that decisions about children's and young people's learning and school life are taken within schools, supported by parents and the local community.

Key strengths

1. Headteachers have the freedom and responsibility to lead improvement in their own schools enabled by flexible structures and support and challenge from local authority staff.
2. Improvement planning processes are now more streamlined and the balance between national and local priorities and those identified from individual school's self-evaluation evidence is appropriate.
3. Professional learning, leadership development, access to an increasing range of qualitative and quantitative data and increasing collaboration within and across schools are enabling empowerment of headteachers and schools to bring about improvement in their schools.
4. Within a range of supportive policies, guidance, curriculum frameworks and shared resources, headteachers and schools are empowered to design and deliver a curriculum which meets their own school's local context.
5. The collegiate approaches between the local authority and schools to staffing supports empowerment of headteachers and schools.
6. Support and challenge from local authorities are empowering headteachers in making decisions about how their funding is spent.

Aspects for improvement

1. Continue to develop and apply the range of qualitative and quantitative measures of success to monitor and evaluate improvements and to ensure high priority is given to gathering evidence of impact on excellence and equity for all.
2. Ensure consistency in empowerment of headteachers in leading improvement through collective leadership and developing a culture of decision-making and influencing direction.
3. Build on the emerging approaches to collaboration to support empowerment, both within and across schools. These approaches need to have clarity of purpose and focus. Schools need to be able to demonstrate improvement in learning, teaching and outcomes for learners as a result of their collaboration.
4. Further support teachers to take the initiative and be creative and innovative in continuing to improve progression, through the broad general education (BGE), especially at points of transition from primary to secondary, and from the BGE through to the senior phase to reflect individual school contexts and learners' needs and interests.
5. Consider ways to further improve the consistency of headteacher empowerment in relation to staffing and funding while ensuring their key focus is on leading school improvements and being leaders of learning and the curriculum.
6. Address staffing shortages to ensure these do not limit empowerment of schools in relation improvement and developing the curriculum.
7. Ensure parents, learners and partners are more actively engaged in contributing to improvement, in designing the local curriculum and in its evaluation, in recruitment of staffing and in decisions about how funding is spent as appropriate.
8. Engage staff and school communities further in discussions about what empowerment means and the potential benefits for learners.

Recommendations

National partners

1.1 Develop and promote a shared understanding of empowerment at each level in the system (practitioner, school leader, authority, regional and national) and ensure that the potential benefits for learners are clearly understood.

1.2 Identify ways to further clarify national expectations in relation to the curriculum to maximise school empowerment to design the local curriculum.

1.3 Identify actions needed by national and local partners to address staffing shortages in order to ensure these do not limit empowerment of schools in relation improvement and curriculum leadership.

1.4 Reflect the dimensions of empowerment in evaluation frameworks and toolkits being devised to support the development of an empowered system.

Local authorities

2.1 Further develop a culture of collective leadership and decision-making where headteachers regard themselves as system leaders.

2.2 Ensure arrangements are in place to promote collaboration within and across schools and beyond to improve education standards and achieve collective goals and aspirations for learners and schools.

2.3 Develop and provide guidance, ways of working and support to promote autonomy and enable empowerment of schools in relation to improvement and curriculum leadership.

2.4 Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for staff at all levels to access high-quality professional learning which challenges thinking, develops skills of enquiry and criticality, and promotes collaborative practices.

2.5 Develop collective leadership through co-producing with schools a range of supportive policies, guidance, curriculum frameworks and shared resources to ensure headteachers and schools are empowered to improve school practices and performance.

2.6 Put in place suitable arrangements to ensure greater consistency of headteacher and school empowerment in relation to staffing and funding processes. These should ensure that headteachers' key focus is on leading learning and school improvements.

Headteachers and schools

3.1 Promote empowerment of the school community through participation and engagement of staff, children and young people, parents and partners. This should ensure involvement in, and ownership of, evidence-based decision-making about the life and work of the school built through consensus.

3.2 Ensure staff at all levels are responsible and trusted to bring about improvements which impact on learning and teaching and outcomes for learners.

3.3 Support staff to take the initiative and be creative and innovative in continuing to improve progression through the learner journey, particularly at transition points.

Appendix 1: Local authorities visited

- Aberdeen City Council
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Angus Council
- Argyll and Bute Council
- Clackmannanshire Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- Dundee City Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- East Dunbartonshire Council
- East Lothian Council
- East Renfrewshire Council
- Falkirk Council
- Fife Council
- Glasgow City Council
- Inverclyde Council
- Midlothian Council
- Moray Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Orkney Islands Council
- Perth and Kinross Council
- Renfrewshire Council
- Scottish Borders Council
- Shetland Islands Council
- South Ayrshire Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Stirling Council
- The City of Edinburgh Council
- The Highland Council
- West Dunbartonshire Council
- Western Isles Council (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)
- West Lothian Council

Appendix 2: Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All 100%

Almost all 91%-99%

Most 75%-90%

Majority 50%-74%

Minority/less than half 15%-49%

A few less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

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