

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery
DATE	19 April 2018
REPORT TITLE	Education Improvement Journey
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/18/001
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CHIEF OFFICER	Bernadette Oxley
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TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement for a proposed approach to school improvement in order to secure improved outcomes for our children and young people. This approach includes the introduction of a series of measures to help track and report progress towards realising the educational ambitions of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and associated Locality Plans.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 note the proposed alignment between the national and local system of planning which will underpin the school improvement plans for the academic term 2018-19;
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Operating Officer to contribute to the development of the Northern Alliance regional improvement plan and submit to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Operating Officer to track progress against the proposed KPIs in order to report progress to the Education Committee. Reporting will comprise a yearly progress report based on validated data and a six monthly update to provide an indication of progress to that point.

3. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 There are many factors which influence our approach to school improvement planning. The national context places a number of duties and requirements on the

council. In terms of the local context, the council as the education authority influences the approach but so do our community planning partners through the Integrated Children's Services partnership board as well as through our locality partnership boards created as a result of the Community Empowerment Act.

3.2 NATIONAL CONTEXT

3.2.1 The National Improvement Framework (NIF)

3.2.2 All Local Authorities published a NIF Plan in September 2017. The NIF plan outlines the local improvement planned, but not limited to schools, in order to:

- Improve attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Close the poverty-related attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.
- Improve children and young people's health and wellbeing.
- Improve employability skills and sustained positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

3.2.3 In addition to these 4 priorities, a number of drivers to support improvement have been identified. The drivers for improvement are:

- Leadership
- Teacher professionalism
- Parental engagement
- Assessment
- School improvement
- Performance

3.2.4 All Pupil Equity and Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding must be aligned to the four priorities with Education Scotland reviewing the impact of this work as part of the school and community learning & development inspection processes.

3.2.5 Significant work has been undertaken to establish a baseline of performance in order to measure the impact of work to address the four priorities of the NIF. This has led to a significant review of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) we use to measure the impact of our work.

3.2.6 Scottish Ministers reserve the right to review the NIF every January and introduced subtle amendments in January 2018. Changes included a need to:

- Focus on professional development and collaboration, both in terms of supporting school leaders to lead the raising attainment agenda and in the development of shared approaches to assessment and moderation.
- Poverty proof improvement activities to ensure the engagement and participation of all children and young people.
- Improve data literacy to support more effective planning to achieve improvements in learner outcomes and ensuring the substantive resources being made available through the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) are used effectively to close the attainment gap.

- Provide access to mental health and wellbeing support and advice in schools for those at risk and who most need it.
- Expand outreach services to increase support for children and young people with additional support needs at the point of need.
- Focus on delivery of Developing the Young Workforce as a key element of the curriculum to increase the number of young people reaching a positive and sustained destination.

3.2.7 Our NIF plan should now be reviewed to check alignment with these subtle amendments.

3.3 Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA)

3.3.1 New web-based standardised assessments in literacy and numeracy are currently being implemented in all schools across Scotland. The assessments are administered to learners at P1, P4, P7 and S3 and should provide some helpful information on children's progress to support teachers' professional judgement. This national approach is in its infancy and is likely to provide information for teachers when considering children's progress and planning next steps in their learning. The information from assessments will be transferred into a digital benchmarking tool which will enable schools and Local Authorities to compare performance up to S3 with virtual comparators and with other schools across the region. Using this in conjunction with the equivalent Insight tool for S3-S6 is likely to provide a range of new information to inform our thinking. This may lead to a further development of the KPIs.

3.3.2 Although the assessments will provide a source of information to support teacher planning to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy, other areas of the NIF are not measured.

3.3.3 Research would suggest that wellbeing is the most significant factor in school performance and national measures of wellbeing tend to be less robust. SNSA propose to include children with additional support needs and we have yet to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach for our more vulnerable learners.

3.3.4 Gaps in some data around the 4 priorities of the NIF is leading to our local testing of appropriate measures to support improvement over 2018-19 with valid assessments of wellbeing requiring consideration. This may result in some measures being proposed in Appendix 1 of this report being amended to ensure we have a robust and helpful set of KPIs as we move forward.

3.4 The proposed Education (Scotland) Bill

3.4.1 The reforms proposed to be set out in the Education (Scotland) Bill aim to empower schools to effectively lead the delivery of excellence and equity in their school community. This ambition is supported through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) - a fund directly allocated to schools in order to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

- 3.4.2 The Bill will set out how the newly established Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RIC) will promote and support improvement by setting expectations of close collaboration and partnership working between schools and associated services. It is proposed that The RICs will provide consistent, high quality support and improvement services in collaboration with each Local Authority. All RICs submitted a draft improvement plan to The Scottish Government in January 2018. Feedback has been sent to each of the RICs to help refine plans. It is anticipated that finalised regional plans will be resubmitted to The Scottish Government at the end of September 2018 following a period of consultation with key stakeholders.
- 3.4.3 There is an expectation that all Local Authorities will provide some expertise to support the work of the RIC. This new legislation will lead to the need to revise our approach to ensure that we utilise expertise available from across the Northern Alliance (the RIC of which Aberdeen City Council is a member) and ensure that we don't overly commit valuable central resource to the Alliance. The approach also necessitates a need to ensure clear alignment with the LOIP in order to ensure that agreed partnership improvements are reflected at a local school level.
- 3.4.4 A Head Teacher Charter may be introduced as part of this legislation. The charter will increase the level of autonomy and accountability for head teachers particularly around how public funds are used to improve outcomes for children and young people.

3.5 Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. (Scotland) Act 2000

- 3.5.1 The need for school improvement planning was first legislated for in 2000. The legislation was amended in 2017 to reflect the National Improvement Framework, in particular the need to plan to break cycles of deprivation and to effectively engage with families when developing plans. The review reaffirmed that school improvement plans continue to be informed by the authority's annual plan and should reflect the local authority strategy for parental involvement. The plans should be underpinned by consultation and engagement with stakeholders and partners and the extent of this engagement should be made clear in the plan.
- 3.5.2 Plans should be based around the priorities highlighted in the National Improvement Framework with successful approaches informing local authority strategic planning.

3.6 The Provision of Individual Plans for Children and Young People

- 3.6.1 Some children and young people will have an education plan in place such as an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to address a barrier to learning. IEPs are not legal documents meaning that that the local authority does not **have** to produce an IEP or make sure that a child or young person receives the support outlined in it. However, in practice many schools do follow IEPs. Effective early intervention and the use of targeted planning by the Universal Services helps to prevent an escalation of need resulting in the need for a Child's Plan.
- 3.6.2 When any child or young person needs support and intervention that is in addition to supports that are generally available through the Universal Services, a multi-

agency targeted intervention may be required. This type of targeted intervention requires close collaboration and careful planning. This need for collaboration triggers the need for a Child's Plan.

- 3.6.3 The Child's Plan format is used to collaboratively plan interventions to ensure that all partners work towards the agreed desired outcomes. This single approach ensures that supports are coordinated and effectively monitored to maximise impact. The provision of a Child's Plan will become a legal requirement when the final parts of the 2014 Act come into force.
- 3.6.4 Children and young people who have enduring and often complex needs must have a statutory Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) if it is established that it is required. This plan is often in addition to a Child's Plan and places a legal duty on all parties named within the plan to deliver services in accordance with the CSP. This plan is legislated for in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.
- 3.6.5 Although legislation does not guide how the content of these individual plans inform school improvement planning, the Local Authority has recently issued guidance to encourage schools to utilise emerging Safeguarding trends to inform school improvement planning. This approach will ensure that our universal offer responds to emerging risks to children and young people. This approach is in its infancy.

3.7 How Good Is Our Quality Framework

- 3.7.1 The most recent versions were published in 2015 and signal a shift in focus to address the excellence and equity agenda. All frameworks for use in schools, across library services, in Community Learning and Development and in Early Learning and Childcare provide a suite of refreshed and aligned quality indicators to guide improvement. Schools and services are inspected against the Quality Indicators and it is important that our approach to improvement is aligned with these seminal documents.

3.8 A Change in Approach from Education Scotland

- 3.8.1 Education Scotland currently provides all Local Authorities with an Attainment Advisor. The Attainment Advisor works in partnership with the Local Authority to support improvement. The role and remit of the Attainment Advisors is currently being refined and our approaches to improvement will require to be kept under review to ensure that best use is made of this potentially valuable resource.

3.9 LOCAL CONTEXT

3.9.1 Aberdeen City Council as the Education Authority

The amended Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 placed a number of duties on the Education Authority in pursuance of the NIF priorities. In addition to paying due regard to how strategic decision making will impact on those living in

poverty, Education Authorities must ensure that improvement activity within schools is consistent with the strategic priorities of the NIF.

3.9.2 Education authorities must continue to provide education in a way that ensures it is directed **‘to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential’** and as such the new duties build on those in the 2000 Act.

3.9.3 The statutory guidance linked to the legislation suggests that local authorities are likely to:

- Maintain a clear statement on their ambitions in relation to the key priorities in the NIF.
- Align self-evaluation and planning activities with the NIF.
- Provide a cycle of activities which will raise standards, promote engagement, address the impact of deprivation and improve outcomes for all learners.
- Maintain an agreed action plan which will focus on identifying specific objectives, targets and measurable outcomes. It will incorporate milestones which will support a measuring of progress against agreed success criteria.
- Consult with parents on the quality of their child’s learning and provide opportunities for meaningful, relevant and child focussed engagement in order to support parents to actively engage in their child’s learning and progression.
- Liaise with partners in evaluating the impact of intervention and improvement strategies.

3.9.4 The Aberdeen City NIF Plan has been written to satisfy the requirements set out on the statutory guidance.

3.10 Adoption of IHI Improvement methodology

3.10.1 As part of the strategic plan (2017-2018), council approved to follow the adoption of the IHI Improvement methodology which the community planning partnership had adopted. As a result, each directorate was required to produce improvement plans. The then Education and Children’s Services Directorate submitted a Directorate Plan. The plan was aligned with the Local Authority National Improvement Framework Plan to ensure a coordinated approach to improvement.

3.11 Delivery of the Aberdeen Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan and Locality Plans

3.11.1 Aberdeen City Council and partners have developed a Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) to drive partnership work to improve outcomes for the citizens of Aberdeen. The LOIP has identified the themes of Economy, People and Place. These themes guide work to provide sustainable council services which are fit for the 21st century by making the best use of resource already in the wider partnership system. The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) oversees delivery of the LOIP.

3.11.2 Under each theme are key priority areas. Delivery of these priorities is overseen by partnership groups who report to the CPP. Although education makes a contribution to many of the partnership groups, the service significantly contributes to the Integrated Children's Services Board (ICS Board). The ICS Board leads on delivery of the theme 'Children are our Future'.

3.11.3 The 'Children are our Future' theme has 3 primary drivers:

- children are safe and responsible.
- children are getting the best start in life.
- children are respected, included and achieving.

3.11.4 Locality Plans have been put in place in each of the three CPP priority areas. The plans are designed to improve the outcomes of citizens in each locality. It is important that school improvement priorities are closely aligned with Locality Plans in order to make best use of the resource in the system.

3.11.5 Locality Improvement priorities easily link with the NIF priorities and include:

- Increasing the number of positive destination and employability.
- Improving health and wellbeing.
- Increasing provision of Early Learning and Childcare'.
- Reducing the attainment gap.
- Improving levels of literacy.

3.11.6 It is important that school improvement activity helps realise the ambitions of the LOIP and a helpful visual has been developed to support colleagues in schools to align their work with the wider ambitions of the Council (Appendix 1).

3.12 Partnership Forums

3.12.1 Partnership Forums were established from August 2017 and comprise all partners working across an Associated Schools Group. The Partnership Forums provide a 'bottom up' approach to improvement in keeping with the LOIP. The Forums collectively analyse multi-agency data to identify emerging local trends and agree how best to provide the necessary preventative support to children and families. There is early evidence that this approach is enabling multi-agency partners to collaboratively plan preventative interventions by utilising resource already in the system. It is thought that this approach will help grow a strong universal offer suited to individual communities and provide both the primary prevention and early intervention necessary to reduce needs from escalating. We are currently working with the newly formed Business Intelligence Team to ensure that each Partnership Forum has access to multi-agency data to support their improvement planning. This analysis of local need will also inform school improvement planning.

3.13 Integrated Services for Children and Families

3.13.1 Aberdeen City Council agreed a new Target Operating Model to transform Council services and help realise the ambitions of the LOIP. The new Integrated Services for Children and Families function will play a key role in improving Council services around the theme, 'Children are our Future'. Work is currently underway to

establish a more integrated structure that will enable closer collaboration across the Council in order to make best use of resource in the system. The new structure will provide an opportunity for colleagues from different professional disciplines to pool expertise and resource to support vulnerable groups. This will see multi-disciplinary teams being formed and a greater number of opportunities for colleagues to engage in shared professional learning and planning. It is anticipated that this approach has the potential to realise significant improvement for children who require higher levels of support.

3.14 Aligning and Quality Assuring Planning

- 3.14.1 As detailed above, there are a range of influences on the school improvement planning process and it is important that head teachers are able to take account of these influences with relative ease as we move to a more teacher led system. The four priorities of the National Improvement Framework provide a means of bringing all agendas together as all planned improvement activity is closely aligned to the four.
- 3.14.2 A visual has been developed to enable schools to show clear alignment with the various influences (Appendix 1). This has been further enhanced by the development of more detailed visuals for schools in each of the priority areas (exemplar in Appendix 2).
- 3.14.3 School Improvement Plans will be quality assured by the Quality Improvement Team who will check alignment with both local and national drivers in addition to checking that improvement activity focusses on the outcomes to be achieved. Learning from this process will inform next steps.

3.15 The Proposed Approach to School Improvement Planning

- 3.15.1 The approach has been developed to ensure that work addresses areas for improvement from the LOIP. It also addresses all requirements of the National Improvement Framework and the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) initiatives. The approach proposed has been co-developed with head teachers.

3.16 The Identification of Appropriate Baseline Measures

- 3.16.1 The proposed approach is underpinned by the identification of clear baseline measures for the city and the construction of a set of KPIs which are robust and valid. These have been shared and agreed with head teachers and central officers and will be incorporated into school improvement plans where relevant. The baseline measures and KPIs are documented in appendix 3 for information and will be used to review the performance of schools against both virtual comparator schools and national mean scores. This current performance of schools against this set of KPIs will inform the level of intervention by central staff and could result in a higher level of support and challenge where necessary to support improvement.

3.17 Supporting the Improvement Planning Process

3.17.1 A suite of professional learning will be supplemented by advice and guidance on how to align PEF and SAC Plans with the school improvement plan in order to reduce bureaucracy. The guidance also ensures that plans are based on appropriate and clearly identified outcomes for children and young people (Appendix). The impact of this approach will be evaluated to inform next steps.

3.18 The introduction of Improvement Methodology

3.18.1 We will engage with Education Scotland to exemplify how IHI Improvement Methodology has supported school improvement and provide mandatory training for all school leaders over session 18/19. This will lead to the methodology being more embedded in our approaches from session 19/20.

3.19 Action to Address Areas of Underperformance

3.19.1 Head teachers are working with central officers to develop the central team offer most likely to support improvement. It is anticipated that schools will have access to central expertise to support a range of themes and there is an expectation that this support will be mandatory where underperformance has been identified. The development of a peer support programme will also begin to be established in order to develop the expertise across the city to address areas of under- performance.

3.20 Quality Assurance Calendar

3.20.1 A quality assurance calendar will be developed in collaboration with schools. The calendar will have a clear focus on raising attainment and improving the performance of our schools. The calendar will include details of quality assurance visits to schools, improvement events, the focus of head teacher meetings and will identify agendas to be explored by both the associated school group and partnership forums.

3.20.2 Schools will be supported through quality assurance visits which are aligned to the three core Quality Indicators from How Good is Our School 4 and key city themes. The level of support required by schools is categorised depending upon performance, as such schools with a more significant improvement journey will benefit from a higher number of visits to support improvement.

3.21 Implementation through Delivery of the Local Authority NIF Plan

3.21.1 School improvement plans help shape the Local Authority NIF Plan and as such much of the improvement activity is already detailed within the plan. Central teams will continue to carefully support the implementation and monitoring of

progress against the NIF Plan. Ongoing consideration of data will ensure that the NIF plan supports improvement with refinements being made to the plan where appropriate to do so.

3.22 Refining Data

3.22.1 The effectiveness of identified measures and KPIs will be monitored to ensure that they support the improvement planning processes. Committee will be informed of any proposed changes through the reporting cycle detailed in this report.

3.22.2 In addition, central officers and schools are working with educational psychologists to co-construct a robust means of measuring of impact of interventions linked to the pupil equity fund and Scottish attainment challenge schools. This will allow the measurement of the improvement agenda at a school level, ensure that PEF and SAC funding directly improves outcomes for children and young people and enable the impact of interventions to inform planning in other schools. This is likely to lead to the development of some measures out with those identified as KPIs.

3.23 Regional Improvement Collaborative Plan

3.23.1 Central Officers will continue to engage with colleagues from across the Northern Alliance in order to refine the Northern Alliance Improvement Plan. Once the finalised offers from the Regional Improvement Collaborative are received they will be scrutinised and those which are relevant and likely to support our own improvement will be accessed.

3.24 The Development of City Policy and Guidance

3.24.1 On-going review of the data has evidenced a need for local guidance on a number of areas to bring greater consistency of practice. Over 18/19 work we will begin to:

- Develop best practice guidance in the provision of Family Learning.
- Reviewing the Local Authority Attendance Procedures.
- Expectations on the use of SEEMIS as a management information tool.
- Guidance on the effective use of data to secure improvement.

The NIF Plan will be reviewed to ensure that these emerging priorities are reflected within it.

3.25 Sharing Best Practice

3.25.1 It is important that we share emerging best practice and Abernet, a web based system accessed by all staff in schools, will be used in addition to sharing effective approaches at head teacher meetings.

3.25.2 We propose to keep this approach under constant review to ensure that our approaches support improvement.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This approach to raising attainment will ensure that central resource is coordinated to secure improvement and ensure the most impactful use of central resource. All costs being met through existing budgets.
- 4.2 The co-designed strategy will ensure that Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) funding is used to effectively close the poverty-related attainment gap that is particular to individual communities by fostering closer collaboration across the partnership. PEF and SAC funding is issued directly to schools from The Scottish Government. It is expected that head teachers effectively direct the use of the resource to help break the cycle of poverty.
- 4.3 Not implementing this approach could result in resource allocation being disjointed and not effectively realising improvement. This could bring significant long term costs to the Council.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to secure improvement as advocated in the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000. The approach detailed in the report will satisfy this legal obligation.
- 5.2 The Local Authority has duties detailed in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended. The recently updated Code of Practice associated with this legislation introduces some significant changes in how Local Authorities satisfy these duties. Of particular note is the further widening of the term 'additional support needs' to include the need to consider wellbeing needs and provides guidance on the review of measures of wellbeing. It is thought that the approach detailed in the report will ensure we are better placed to comply with these legal duties.
- 5.3 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014 details a range of obligations including:
 - The provision of early learning and childcare.
 - Our responsibilities for Looked After Children.
 - Our partnership approaches to promoting the wellbeing needs of children and young people.

It is intended that the approaches detailed will help to deliver these legal obligations.

- 5.4 The Equality Act, 2010 places duties on Education Authorities not to discriminate against pupils directly or indirectly. It is believed that the focus on measuring performance of vulnerable groups will help delivery on these legal requirements.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	There is a risk of not making the best use of financial resource within out a clear strategy to realise improvement.	M	The implementation of the approach to improvement detailed above will mitigate this risk.
Legal	Not implementing the proposed approach presents a risk of the Local Authority not meeting its statutory obligation to secure improvement as advocated in the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000.	M	Full implementation and monitoring of the impact of the proposed approach will address this legal requirement.
Employee	There is a risk that colleagues in schools feel overwhelmed by the many national and local changes.	M	The aligned plan, appendices and approach detailed in the report will help minimise bureaucracy and minimise the risk of staff feeling overwhelmed.
Customer	An absence of clear and agreed approach would result in a high risk of not improving outcomes for children, young people and families.	M	The implementation of this approach and tracking of agreed measures will help mitigate this risk.
Environment	No risks have been identified.		
Technology	No immediate technological risks have been identified, although there are significant opportunities to make effective use of technology to realise		

	improvement.		
Reputational	Considerable financial resource is allocated to schools through PEF and SAC funding. There is a significant reputational risk if this resource does not bring about improvement.	M	This risk is mitigated by the implementation of the approach detailed in the report.

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	The approach to improvement will have a positive impact on the economy as it will ensure that children, young people and families have access to a strong universal offer of support designed around local need and in consultation with locality based partners. This approach will make the best use of council resource.
Prosperous People	The proposed approach to improvement will have a positive impact on the attainment and wellbeing of children and young people in Aberdeen. The focus on closely tracking performance will ensure that the council provides evidence of its commitment to improving outcomes for all learners and in particular those living in poverty and its understanding of and improvement to the outcomes of those with protected characteristics.
Prosperous Place	The approach should help to build community resilience by utilising available resource to offer a strong universal offer of support to children, young people and families based on local need. It also provides opportunities to learn from emerging best practice to inform the universal offer of our communities.
Enabling Technology	Effective use of the new Business intelligence function will be made to ensure that technology is harnessed to track, monitor and report on progress and provide evidence about the effectiveness of interventions, thus assisting with future planning.

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	The proposed model is designed to enable colleagues in schools to improve levels of data literacy to ensure a robust approach to improvement. Effective and efficient use of data will smarten planning and maximise the impact on learners.
Workforce	The suite of professional learning will support the workforce to realise the ambitions of the National Improvement Framework and the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
Technology	The Business Intelligence function will support our access to performance information to inform planning
Partnerships and Alliances	The proposed model will ensure that any services commissions through PEF are outcome focussed and carefully tracked to monitor impact.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Required
Privacy Impact Assessment	Required
<u>Children's Rights Impact Assessment/Duty of Due Regard</u>	Applicable

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

10. APPENDICES

1. Alignment Visual
2. Exemplar Locality Plan which has been aligned with the NIF
3. Proposed KPIs
4. School Improvement Plan Guidance

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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