

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education & Children's Services Committee
DATE	20 February 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Collaborative Improvement Report
REPORT NUMBER	CFS/24/048
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne
REPORT AUTHOR	Shona Milne
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Education service participated in a Collaborative Improvement Review in November 2023. This report outlines the process of a Collaborative Improvement Review and presents the outcome of this peer review model.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 note the Collaborative Improvement Review report; and
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Education Officer to keep Committee sighted on national developments around Collaborative Improvement models which impact the remit of the Education and Children's Services Committee.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Based on the recommendations from the 2015 OECD report, the Education Reform Joint Agreement published in June 2018, had one of its key principles as 'effective system-wide improvement requires strong leadership, collaborative working and clarity of purpose at all layers of the system – school, local, regional and national.' To take this forward ADES (the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland) and Education Scotland have developed a Collaborative Improvement (CI) model.
- 3.2 The model is resourced by an ADES Officer acting as coordinator. The coordinator secures the release of senior colleagues from some of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities whilst Education Scotland identify a team of Inspectors and Officers to join a peer review team. Over the Collaborative Improvement visit the team work with the host Local Authority to explore a key question of the host Local Authority's choosing. In real terms, CI enables an individual Local Authority to identify an area for further exploration based on their own self-evaluation and then benefit from an objective 3 day peer assessment of what is working well and what may require further focus.
- 3.3 Given the variation in Early Learning and Childcare inspection outcomes, the education service chose to focus the three day peer assessment on our

approach to supporting improved quality of Early Learning and Childcare. The service was keen to explore if there was anything further that could be done to accelerate improvement.

- 3.4 The Interim Chief Education Officer a Quality Improvement Manager (Primary) and the Service Manager Early years worked together to identify the key question to be explored during the three day peer assessment. Following engagement with members of the Collaborative Improvement Team, **“To what extent does our engagement with ELC managers/leaders empower staff at all levels to improve outcomes for children and their families?”** was agreed as the question to form the basis of the review.

Activity During the Visit

- 3.5 Prior to the visit all members of the team were sent copies of our Quality Improvement Framework to review along with recent Care Inspectorate gradings to provide a context for the review.
- 3.6 The visiting team consisted of 2 Attainment Advisors, an Inspector with ELC experience, 3 peer local authority representatives, the Education Scotland lead for Early Years and a senior Officer from ADES. Following an input from Aberdeen City Council officers to set the context, the team spent time speaking to focus groups of staff and had the opportunity to visit a number of ELC settings to spend time in the playrooms and speak to families.
- 3.7 The Collaborative Improvement Team (CIT) found staff to be open and honest in their focus groups, sharing what they felt worked well and what they felt could be improved locally in their own settings and across the sector.
- 3.8 The CIT noted the enthusiasm of staff teams and were impressed by the number of staff keen to describe and share best practice. They commented on the positive impact of recent sharing and training events and the plans to create more opportunities for practitioners from different settings to come together. The final report, which provides a comprehensive summary of learning from the peer review visit, is available in Appendix A.
- 3.9 In general terms, the peer review process validated the approach being taken to improve quality across Aberdeen City. The CIT noted that the implementation of 1140 had been tightly controlled due to the restrictions in place at the time and that this had inadvertently built an over reliance on the central team and in particular Locality Leads. The visits to ELC settings allowed the CIT to experience the variability across the authority and identify settings who were finding solutions and improving independently of the central team and those with an overreliance on Locality Leads. The CIT prompted the team to consider some further actions that could be utilised to build more independence. Suggestions include introducing mandatory training for all registered managers, streamlining communication to all ELC staff, and the establishment of ELC working groups to progress developments particularly in literacy and numeracy. An action plan with anticipated timelines for delivery of the suggested next steps is contained in Appendix B.
- 3.10 The CIT noted that the new national framework could provide a further opportunity to review roles and responsibilities within settings and the local authority.

- 3.11 The service welcomed the opportunity to participate in the collaborative improvement process. It was helpful to have our self-evaluation validated by peers and take the time to review the arrangements in place to support improvement in ELC.

Further National collaborative models

- 3.12 Considerable work is on-going nationally to look at how collaborative improvement models can add more value than traditional scrutiny models following the successful role out of the ADES Collaborative Improvement Model. As a result, a developing framework for Education Authority inspections is likely to follow a collaborative improvement approach. It is proposed that the Chief Education Officer keep Committee sighted on developments in this area.
- 3.13 Self-evaluation remains important for all Local Authority clusters and functions. Aberdeen City Council is currently making use of Improvement Service self-evaluation tools to support an evaluation of Corporate Boards. This collaboration with the Improvement Service will ensure that we continue to improve our approaches to managing performance and risk based on a robust evaluation of the impact of current approaches and will help us benefit from fresh perspectives and external peer challenge.
- 3.14 COSLA and the Improvement Service are committed to collaborative improvement models and are currently exploring how to establish further models to empower and enable Local Authorities and partners to accelerate improvement and learn from each other. The Interim Director Children and Families continues to monitor these developments closely to ensure that the Local Authority is well placed to positively respond.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The costs of the Collaborative Improvement Visit were met from established budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Having regard to the Collaborative Improvement Team feedback will assist the Council discharge its statutory duties under Education legislation more effectively.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 No risks have been identified

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not improving outcomes for children in ELC .	Quality Improvement Framework in place and the approach to quality improvement has been validated through the Collaborative Improvement approach.	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not complying with national guidance	Approaches being used to support improvement are aligned to national guidance.	L	Yes
Operational	Risk that improvement work does not lead to improved outcomes for learners	There is clear evidence that providing high quality services will help improve outcomes for children. Documentation and approaches are aligned with national quality frameworks.	L	Yes
Financial	No risks identified			
Reputational	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a reputational risk to the Council	Evidence that current approaches are realising an improvement in quality	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	This report will help the service ensure that high quality services are made available to children, high

Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.	quality services are most likely to help close the poverty attainment gap.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People - 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026	Engagement with the Collaborative Improvement Review team has provided Officers with the opportunity to reflect on current approaches to quality improvement and gain from the insights of the various members of the review team.
Regional and City Strategies Prevention Strategy Children's Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan	Engagement with Collaborative Improvement Team is fully aligned to the city prevention strategy. Work to address poverty and improvement in the Children's services plan, the Child Poverty Action Plan and the National Improvement Framework Plan is also supported through external scrutiny.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	A Stage 1 Assessment has been completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	No

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A Collaborative Improvement Report
Appendix B Collaborative Improvement Action Plan

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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