

Collaborative Improvement Programme
Perth and Kinross Council Education Service
Summary Report

Introduction

The Collaborative Improvement Programme is a new approach to bringing about improvement. The basis of this approach is outlined in the [Education Reform – Joint Agreement](#) issued by the Scottish Government in June 2018 and accords with the call for a ‘strengthened middle’ in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report from 2015 [Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective](#). The approach is also intended to address the recommendation in the Audit Scotland report [Improving outcomes for young people through school education](#) (March 2021) that Councils should work with schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, and partners, to reduce variability in educational outcomes for children and young people across local authority areas.

The Collaborative Improvement Programme is now being undertaken across all 32 local authorities in Scotland, and Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) Education Service was the third local authority to participate. The first phase of the PKC programme took place between 24 November and 7 December 2021, with further activities planned over subsequent months.

The Collaborative Improvement Process in Perth and Kinross

Planning and process

The focus for the Collaborative Improvement activity was agreed through discussion with Education Scotland and ADES colleagues.

It was based on the priorities already identified by the service, and once agreed, a number of planning meetings took place to structure the visit and plan the activities within the local authority that the team would undertake. As this programme took place between November and December of 2021, the meetings and visits were virtual, although some in-person activity is planned to take place over the coming months.

Five representatives from both Education Scotland and ADES were identified to work alongside Perth and Kinross Council Education Service colleagues to form the Collaborative Improvement Team. Within this team the activity overall was led by the Executive Officer from ADES, a Senior HM Inspector from Education Scotland and the Head of Education and Learning from Perth and Kinross Council.

Prior to engaging in the Collaborative Improvement activity, the Education Service had a clear priority in respect of inclusive practice and in particular, support and outcomes for young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN).

The Education Service was clear that, as a key part of this process, it would be helpful to consider best practice in other local authorities, and how they addressed the 'wicked issues' around inclusion of young people with SEBN. Therefore, the model of Collaborative Improvement for Perth and Kinross included input from three other local authorities who had volunteered to share information on their approaches. The three Local Authorities that participated were South Lanarkshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and Glasgow City Council.

Focus of Activity in Perth and Kinross

Perth and Kinross Council Education Plan [Perth and Kinross Council Education Plan](#) sets out the ambition of the service to raise attainment and achievement and reduce inequity. It recognises that key to achieving this aim is to prioritise improvement in three key areas: inclusive practice, professional learning and development, and partnerships. The Collaborative Improvement Programme provided an opportunity to consider the strategic planning for improving inclusive practice and in particular it was agreed that the focus would be to consider to what extent there was:

- A culture of inclusion evident across all secondary schools.
- Capacity within / across our secondary schools to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEBN are met fully.
- An effective continuum of support in secondary schools and beyond for all young people with SEBN.

A programme of activity was then planned to support that overall aim. The activity extended over two weeks and involved five half-day online sessions. The first session focused on a presentation by Perth and Kinross Education Service on the self-evaluation of the delivery of inclusive education for Secondary stage young people with SEBN. This was followed by three subsequent sessions during which South Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire and Glasgow City Councils each provided information on the strengths and challenges they experienced in delivering additional support for young people with SEBN.

The Collaborative Improvement team then worked together to reflect and share thinking on the learning from these sessions, with a key focus on what activity would support Perth and Kinross to achieve improved outcomes. The analysis and challenge provided by Education Scotland and ADES colleagues supported reflection by the Perth and Kinross Council participants and enhanced the distillation of an Education Authority-level improvement plan, drawing on learning developed over the course of the Collaborative Improvement programme.

Findings

The findings from the visit identified strengths and challenges, which are set out in some detail below.

As a starting point for the Collaborative improvement activity a presentation of the self-evaluation material gathered by Perth and Kinross Council was delivered. Feedback from the Collaborative improvement team identified that the service demonstrated the following strengths:

- Coherent plans are in place to take forward improvement,
- The service is data rich, and this is used to drive forward improvement,
- There was good evaluation of equity gaps in relation to ASN outcomes (attendance, exclusion, achievement, positive destinations),
- There is a clear recognition that ownership of inclusive practice needs to extend to all who work with children and young people,
- The need to develop staff values, skills and confidence in supporting young people with ASN is a priority, and
- The service has a strong capacity for improvement.

Learning From Other Local Authorities

The learning gained from consideration of the information provided by South Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire and Glasgow City Councils highlighted the importance of the following broad general themes:

- Highly visible vision and leadership of inclusion and equity.
- Whole systems approach.
- Stakeholder engagement:
 - Parental expectations and understanding.
 - Staff commitment and importance of sharing success and staying focused.
- Data drives improvement.
- Equity requires a relentless focus.
- Specialist Provisions require careful consideration within a continuum of support.

Planned improvements

Perth and Kinross Education Service already had a commitment to improving inclusive practice and the Education Plan 2021/22 encompassed actions to support delivery of these aspirations. The Collaborative Improvement programme provided an opportunity to reflect on current commitments and to further refine actions to specifically focus on those improvements that will enable young people with SEBN to achieve improved levels of achievement and attainment and narrowing the gaps in attainment levels.

The Education Plan 2022-2023 contains detail of actions relating to improvement in this area, including:

- Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) programme across all secondary schools.

- Schools will be supported to implement the recommendations from the 2019-20 Broad General Education (BGE) Secondary Curricular Review Paper developed in collaboration with Education Scotland colleagues.
- Create a Perth and Kinross Senior Phase offer to complement learner pathways offered at individual schools.
- Programme of in-person visits to other local authorities' specialist provisions.
- Development and implementation of Professional Learning Programmes for both teaching and support staff.
- Redesign of support services and additional roles within schools to support children and families.
- Joint working with Services for Children, Young People and Families.
- Stronger networks with parents and third sector partners.
- Involvement of all relevant stakeholders in planned changes and improvements.

Next Steps

- Perth and Kinross Council will incorporate key aspects of this process into the ASN Transformation and Change Programme, and into Service Improvement Planning.
- Education Scotland locality team will continue to work alongside the Education Service to support the delivery of key actions.
- Progress will be recorded through the Education Plan reporting process.
- The Education Service will follow up engagement with colleagues from other local authorities and further collaborate on key areas of improvement.

Conclusion

The collaborative improvement programme has provided Perth and Kinross Education Service with some valuable feedback on evaluation of strengths and challenges within a key area of focus. It also strengthened the partnerships with Education Scotland and ADES colleagues and laid the foundations of future collaboration. This collaboration will extend to school leaders working with other colleagues in the local authorities with whom this programme was undertaken.