

Item: 11

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 8 February 2023.

Phase 4 Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan.

Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To present the Northern Alliance Progress and Impact Report for 2021-22 and consider the Regional Improvement Collaborative Phase 4 Plan 2022-2025.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the Northern Alliance, which has a shared vision to improve the educational and life chances of children and young people, is a Regional Improvement Collaborative between eight local authorities across the North and West of Scotland.

2.2.

That each Regional Improvement Collaborative is required by a joint Steering Group, comprising representation from the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and local government, to produce a Regional Improvement Plan.

2.3.

The Northern Alliance Progress and Impact Report 2021-22, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, which sets out the work achieved over the final year of the Regional Improvement Collaborative Phase 3 Plan.

2.4.

That, on 7 September 2022, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended that the National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2022/23 be approved for submission to the Scottish Government.

2.5.

The Regional Improvement Collaborative Phase 4 Plan 2022-2025, attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

2.6.

The illustrative relationship between the National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2022/23 and the Regional Improvement Collaborative Phase 4 Plan 2022-2025, as set out in section 6 of this report.

2.7.

That, from 1 January 2023, James Wylie, Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, takes on the role of Regional Improvement Lead for a two-year period until 31 December 2024.

It is recommended:

2.8.

That the Regional Improvement Collaborative Phase 4 Plan 2022-2025, attached as Appendix 2 to this report, be approved in so far as it relates to the work of the Council.

3. The Northern Alliance

3.1.

The Northern Alliance is a Regional Improvement Collaborative between eight local authorities, across the north and west of Scotland - Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar (Western Isles), Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands - with a shared vision to improve the educational and life chances of our children and young people through collaboration.

3.2.

Originally coming together to collectively address a shared challenge of teacher recruitment and retention, the Northern Alliance remains committed to improving outcomes and closing the gap which exists across the wide and varied communities and, crucially, championing a child and family-centred approach to address achievement and to drive improvement.

3.3.

The Northern Alliance continues to strive to achieve workstream priorities, set out in its Regional Improvement Plan, which remain aligned to the National Improvement Framework priorities and have been developed collaboratively with local authority practitioners and national partners.

3.4.

From the beginning of January 2023 James Wylie, Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing took on the role of Regional Improvement Lead for a two year period ending in December 2024.

3.5.

On 7 September 2022, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended that the National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2022/23 be approved for submission to the Scottish Government. It is important therefore that the connection between the local plan and Northern Alliance, Regional Improvement Plan, is made explicit.

4. Regional Improvement Collaborative Phase 3 Plan: Progress and Impact

4.1.

The Northern Alliance Progress & Impact Report 2021-22, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, sets out the work which has been achieved over the final year of the Regional Improvement Collaborative Phase 3 Plan.

4.2.

Throughout the pandemic and specifically over the past year, colleagues across the Northern Alliance have continued to work hard to develop meaningful and active collaboration which can truly make a difference to practitioners in their day-to-day work. Directly and indirectly, this supports an overall objective of improving outcomes for children and young people. Much of this has been achieved through the specific improvement strategy, which is known as the CCITI model (Connect, Collaborate, Innovation and Ideas, Try Out and Test and Improvement).

4.3.

Academic Session 2022-23 marked the final year of the current regional improvement planning cycle and, since January 2022, the Regional Improvement Collaborative has undertaken its most significant engagement exercise to date with schools across the Northern Alliance as it has developed the Phase 4 Plan and priorities. This involved undertaking 22 live engagement sessions involving 460 practitioners, resulting in over 1,400 contributions which were used in shaping the Phase 4 Plan.

5. Regional Improvement Plan Phase 4

5.1.

Each Regional Improvement Collaborative is required by a joint Steering Group - consisting of the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and Local Government - to produce a Regional Improvement Plan. Phase 4 of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan has been prepared and is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

5.2.

As a Regional Improvement Collaborative, there must be a commitment to a vision of developing a culture of collaboration, sharing of expertise and creating local networks to improve the educational and life changes of children and young people. The Phase 4 Plan (2022 – 2025) has been developed in line with Michael Fullan's "Right Drivers for Whole System Success" which are:

- Wellbeing and Learning (Feeling well and learning well).
- Social Intelligence (How we work and learn together).
- Equality Investments (How we break down barriers to wellbeing and learning).
- Systemness (Working together to improve our system).

5.3.

It is fully anticipated that successful implementation of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan will lead to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families. There will be a positive impact on children, young people and families, particularly those experiencing poverty.

6. Links Between the Regional Improvement Plan and National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan

6.1.

An illustrative rather than exclusive relationship between National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2022/23 and the Regional Improvement Collaborative Phase 4 Plan is set out below.

6.2.

Orkney's priority of Inclusion and Wellbeing (Staged Intervention, Health and Wellbeing and the United Nation's Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)) is typically connected with, and supported by, the following aspects of the Phase 4 Plan: Building Confidence and Clarity; Learner and Family Participation; Learner Rights and Voice.

6.3.

Orkney's priority of Learning and Achievement (Curriculum Review, Key Principles and High-Quality Learning and Teaching and Scottish Attainment Challenge) is typically connected with, and supported by, the following aspects of the Phase 4 Plan: Curriculum Design; Learning Teaching and Assessment.

6.4.

Orkney's priority of Systems and Processes (Self-Evaluation for Self-Improvement, Professional Learning Collaborative, Resources and Management Systems) is typically connected with, and supported by, the following aspects of the Phase 4 Plan: Systemness; Professional Enquiry; Social Intelligence).

6.5.

During the course of the 2022-2025 Phase 4 plan, individuals, teams and whole school communities in Orkney will be able to benefit from' as well as contribute to' the work of the Northern Alliance. The network of support being offered is a rich and diverse resource, with a strong shared experience of what it means to live and learn in remote, rural and island communities, from which children, young people, families and staff may all benefit.

7. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

8. Financial Implications

8.1.

There are no financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

8.2.

There is an agreement that Scottish Government funding will continue for Regional Improvement Collaboratives until March 2023. A guarantee of continued funding would provide stability for the collaborative in moving forward with the regional improvement plan and its vision for children and young people across the Northern Alliance. Discussions are currently ongoing between Scottish Government, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and Education Scotland around the future direction of Regional Improvement Collaboratives.

9. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

10. Contact Officers

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Northern Alliance – Progress and Impact Report 2021-22.

Appendix 2: Regional Improvement Collaborative – Phase 4 Plan 2022-2025.

NORTHERN ALLIANCE

PROGRESS & IMPACT REPORT


2021-22





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FOREWORD

As the current Regional Improvement Lead, I am pleased to share an overview of progress and activity for 2021-2022 as we strive towards collaborative improvement. Networks across our local authorities continue to grow with increasing numbers of people engaging with activity. This year also marks the end of our current plan and therefore an opportunity to reflect on the last 3 years as we move into the next phase of regional improvement and collaboration.

Phase 3 has been a significant period of development for the Northern Alliance, and it is encouraging that we continue to see increased engagement across our eight local authorities despite the ongoing challenges faced in our Scottish education system, in our own local contexts and across the world.

The Covid-19 pandemic provided the catalyst for refocusing on our vision and aim as a collaborative and from there we responded by adding value to school/ setting and local authority activity where needed. As we emerge from the pandemic, we have been considering the significant challenges and opportunities our 21st century learners will face as citizens of the future. To make sure we get it right for all of our learners, we have been engaging with Michael Fullan's Right Drivers for Whole System Success. You can read about how we have been using the drivers to shape our current and future activity later in this report, which reflects the real value of collaboration; working together to share practice, solve problems and try out new and innovative ways of working.

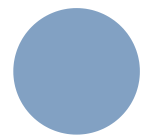
Despite the challenges we have all faced in the past two years, we look forward to extending and deepening our collaborative activity in the next phase of our plan. Thank you to everyone who has played their part in shaping the Northern Alliance so far.

Laurence Findlay, Regional Improvement Lead

July 2022



Driving Improvement from within the Northern Alliance



Developing a culture of collaboration, sharing of expertise and creating local and regional networks to improve the educational and life chances of our children and young people.

Our vision sets out how we as a collaborative of 8 local authorities should work together to improve outcomes for all our learners. The tricky bit is how we do work together. Michael Fullan, a worldwide expert in Whole System Change in Education, in his book 'Coherence', states, '*Collaborating is not just about creating a place where people feel good but rather cultivating the expertise of everyone to be focused on a collective purpose.*'

In other words, collaboration is no use unless it leads to impact. But we do know that in order to achieve impact, the most powerful way is through meaningful collaboration – hence the purpose of our RICs.

Over the course of the Phase 3 plan, we have worked together to gain clarity around what it means to meaningfully collaborate. This has resulted in the development of the Northern Alliance Collaboration Framework, which was developed and then tested within our networks.

The Framework helps us to understand what effective collaboration looks and feels like, with four core principles and ten indicators, taking you from '*latent collaboration*' to '*active collaboration*'. Our Collaboration Framework has helped us to get better at working with people across the Northern Alliance and it is now supporting colleagues in schools and settings to do the same.

As we have gained a deeper understanding of collaboration, our activity within the RIC has evolved. In the early days of Phase 3, most of our activity was focused on professional learning offers which tended to be more about 'learning from an expert' as opposed to learning with and from one another.



CONNECT TO COLLABORATE

We need to know that our collaborative activity within the Northern Alliance is having a positive impact on our learners. In order to do that, we developed an **improvement strategy called CCITI**, and we promote its use at school/setting and even local authority level. **CCITI** provides the road map for our journey towards improvement through the 5 points of ***Connect, Collaborate, Innovation and Ideas, Try Out and Test, and Improvement.***



Northern Alliance Improvement Model
our journey towards improvement

Why are we on the journey to improvement?
Our vision – improving outcomes through collaboration



What is it that we want to achieve?
Our Northern Alliance Improvement Plan

HOW
How are we going to achieve this?
Connect, Collaborate,
Ideas/Innovation, Try/ Test,
Improvement - **CCITI**

Our professional learning offer is now less focused on 'one off' sessions and is more about learning over time, which builds relationships and enables practice to be shared. This year, our data tells us that only 25% of our collaborative activity was focused on professional learning, with the remaining 75% of our collaborative activity focused on working together to share learning, solve problems and shape future activity. **Over the life of the phase 3 plan, there has been a total of 1,667 collaborative engagements with approximately 18,275 professionals engaged in total.** In addition to working across our 8 local authorities, we also work closely with the Education Scotland Northern Team, as well as national Education Scotland members.

Learning and practice are also shared with colleagues from the other Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs), and we are beginning to collaborate on projects together. National partners such as the Data for Children's Collaborative (with UNICEF) have worked with us to explore how we can more effectively use data to identify children affected by poverty in the Northern Alliance.

We have also engaged in several research projects over the phase 3 plan and have worked in partnership with our universities to support us with this activity. Most recently, the University of Aberdeen carried out research into shared headships across the Northern Alliance and we look forward to the report being published in the early autumn.

One of the real challenges which we are working to overcome is around how we share opportunities for working and learning together.

Moving to an online world as a result of Covid, we began to use Microsoft Teams to facilitate meeting and learning together. It was a real joy to be able to continue to connect and collaborate virtually and our networks have really taken off as we have become more confident and capable.

At present, **we have 57 active Northern Alliance Teams, with 2,901 memberships.** Not only does Microsoft Teams enable us to connect and collaborate, but **we can also share resources and signpost to national policies and practice.** Since September 2020, a total number of **1,984 resources** have been shared via our Teams. However, the use of Teams has not been without its challenges. Colleagues within some of our local authorities struggle to connect to Teams – mainly because of their familiarity with using Glow or because of security restrictions within their corporate Teams. However, perseverance usually wins the day and over time we are seeing fewer issues. Moving forward, we plan to work even more closely with local authority digital leads to further improve online collaboration.

Feedback tells us that people are sometimes not aware of opportunities for collaborating. Our newsletter format has evolved over time and now people can subscribe and receive regular updates via email. At last count, we had **4,575 subscribers.**



We use SharePoint to share resources developed within our workstreams. Over the Phase 3 plan, we have gained a total of **73,062 site visits, with over 7,000 unique views.** Social media has also been helpful in raising awareness of RIC activity and we currently have **5,472 @NallianceScot Twitter followers,** and we also have accounts for our Early Years, 1+2 Languages, Closing the Gap and Secondary Curriculum workstreams – with a grand total of **8,961 followers.** You can read some of our Twitter feedback [here.](#)



Each day throughout December, we also shared examples of our learning and collaborative activity via 'Snow and Tell' - an online celebration of learning. Snow and Tell 2021 received **1,600 views throughout December and into January 2022.** This is a great way for us to share learning and raise awareness of our RIC activity.

Over the past year, we have also been testing the water with a Facebook page. Early signs are that this will be a welcome addition to our social media communication toolbox! However, there is more to be done in this area and as we move into phase 4, we have plans to further improve our reach across all 8 local authorities.

INNOVATION AND IDEAS

Another key action within our vision is to create networks so that people can learn with and from one another. Central to our workstreams are our networks of practitioners who come together to **problem solve, share practice and learning** – both at operational and strategic level. You can read about the wide range of exciting improvement activity taking place within our workstreams later in this report.

TRY OUT AND TEST

At workstream level, we work together to monitor progress towards our priorities over time and we use a monthly progress tracker to help us understand where there are barriers and where there are opportunities to learn from one another. We use an improvement methodology called the '**Model for Improvement**' to help us develop shared aims, meaningful measures and data processes to capture progress over time. As of April 2022, only 3 of the 45 measures listed were not 'on track' or 'achieved' and this was mainly as a result of waiting for case studies to be completed by busy practitioners.

IMPROVEMENT

The CCITI strategy provides us with a structure to capture improvement within the RIC. We capture both qualitative and quantitative data at each point to help us understand whether the changes we are making are leading to improvement. As our networks test and try out innovative approaches and ideas, their improvement activity is captured via case studies, so that their practice and learning can be shared across the system. Over the past two years, we have captured many case studies which share learning in a range of different contexts – from Early Years to CLD and from play based pedagogy to retrieval practice. Our case studies are shared via the **Northern Alliance 'Our Journey' website**, which was established in 2021 to evidence improvement activity across the Northern Alliance.

It is remarkable that such progress has been made by practitioners in busy schools and settings at a time when colleagues have been navigating the challenges brought about by Covid, as well as working within an education system which is experiencing significant change. However, colleagues have also stated that they have found the opportunity to come together and share their experiences not only improves their practice, but also helps them to feel more energised and increases motivation. As we move forward, we need to do more of this – reduce silo working and work more closely together so that we can share what works well and tackle some of the problems we share together. That way, we have the best chance to improve outcomes for all our learners – together.

*"Children are the Priority
Change is the Reality
Collaboration is the Strategy."*

Judith B - Washington State Superintendent.

The Right Drivers for Whole System Success

We have been engaging with Michael Fullan's [*Right Drivers for Whole System Success*](#) to shape how we move forward as a Regional Improvement Collaborative:

- Wellbeing and Learning – *learning well and feeling well*
- Social Intelligence – *how we work and learn together*
- Equality Investments – *breaking down barriers to learning and wellbeing*
- Systemness (super driver) – *connecting across and blurring our boundaries - building a shared responsibility for improving outcomes.*



Michael Fullan shared 'The Right Drivers for Whole System Success' with the world in February 2021, just as we all began to realise that there was no 'normal' or 'getting back to normal'. Things were changing and we needed to make sure that they were changing for the better. The Drivers don't state anything new or different to what we already know, however they bring a sense of clarity around what we need to focus on for our learners and for one another as we move forward within the 21st century.

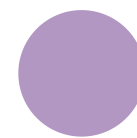
As a team we listened to the podcasts, we engaged in the webinars, and we talked about how the Drivers could support us in our work as a RIC. We are now using the Drivers to improve how we **connect with our networks, develop our practice, and learn with and from each other**. This is helping to deepen our understanding of the Drivers and more importantly, begin to shape what they may look like in our schools and settings. You can read about how our workstreams, and their networks have engaged with the Drivers within the workstream overviews.

Michael Fullan has been very supportive of the Northern Alliance, providing us with feedback on how we are engaging with the Drivers. In our December newsletter, Michael Fullan shared his latest reflections on the Right Drivers:

"I realize it now that the drivers are best seen as a 'treasure map', not a blueprint. No system change worth its salt has ever come about via a blueprint. All system change combines planned and unplanned happenings – planned ideas which fail and succeed (hopefully retaining much of the latter); unplanned events and ideas being sorted to retain the most useful ones."

There is no blueprint for success or for moving forward and we cannot copy what works well in one context and expect it to lead to success within our own. What we can do is use a treasure map, with key landmarks and pitfalls to negotiate, and important milestones to achieve - learning with and from one another along the way.

Evaluating Phase 3 - Workstream Summaries



CURRICULUM

Early Years

Throughout the course of the phase 3 plan, the Early Years Workstream has **built strong and supportive collaborative networks** making connections across the workforce including partner providers and childminders. Agile ways of working have arisen from the pandemic and the use of technology has supported the development of networks across the RIC, allowing practitioners to connect, learn and improve together. These networks now sit within the overarching **Early Years Connect to Collaborate** team in Glow, which acts as a "base camp" for workstream activity. The Team established in 2021, was created in response to the practitioner ask to connect with others during the challenge of Covid lockdown.

The Early Years Workstream connects with partners locally, regionally and nationally to ensure there is a focus on developing a consistent and high-quality Early Level offer across the RIC. At Strategic Lead Level the Workstream supports and facilitate sharing of practice, information and peer networking while connecting and feeding back to increase agency and a culture of leadership at all levels.

[Click here to read the Early Years Workstream 2021-22 Progress & Impact Report](#)

1+2 Language Development

The 1+2 Languages Development Workstream has gone from a strategic group meeting infrequently into a **true collaboration of language leaders and practitioners** across authorities and of partners with ongoing CLPL opportunities and resource development. From initial developments of the 1+2 site on the Northern Alliance Glow SharePoint to the family learning site developed in response to the pandemic, and **increased shared CLPL programme and Teacher Hub**, the Workstream continues to mature as a network and respond to practitioner need and feedback.

Collaboration has grown from **sharing approaches and expertise** within our Northern Alliance authorities to involvement in wider projects, including the development of a University Mentor Scheme with SCILT and further collaboration on resource creation with other local authorities including Angus and West Lothian.

Looking into Phase 4, the Workstream will continue to **collaborate to support consistency and sustainability** in 1+2 implementation across the Northern Alliance focusing on areas such as teacher confidence in language and pedagogy as identified in the national 1+2 Languages survey.

[Click here to read the 1+2 Language Development Workstream 2-21-22 Progress & Impact Report](#)

Numeracy and Maths

Over the course of the Phase 3 plan, the workstream has worked across primary and secondary sectors to **share effective approaches to learning and teaching** in numeracy and maths. Before COVID-19, the workstream hosted its first maths conference. Subsequently as we moved into lockdown, our online capacities to facilitate these conferences and extend our reach grew in size. This led to greater networking and sharing of expertise from across the region and country.

Small scale tests of change also had to adapt to the changing context. Our fractions development project with primary practitioners in Shetland was adapted. This project aimed to **develop the key pedagogical practices** which promote understanding in fractions. Why? Because a strong knowledge of fractions in primary school is a strong predictor of secondary maths attainment. Translating the lessons of the small scale test of change, we opened up opportunities for development across the region - inviting primary teachers to develop their pedagogical practice in regards to fractions. Through robust evaluation methodologies, we can report that there has been a **statistically significant increase in fractions attainment**.

The key learning from these activities as well as the Phase 3 plan are proving beneficial to **informing wider practice and developments** through the National Response to Improving Mathematics in Scotland, with the workstream sharing experiences and learning within the national partnership board - highlighting what is working well and where the system required additional support.

[Click here to read the Numeracy & Maths Workstream 2021-22 Progress & Impact Report](#)

Primary and Secondary Curriculum (2020-2022)

The Primary and Secondary Curriculum Workstreams have made significant steps in bringing practitioners together through networks to share practice and learning, as well as a wide-ranging professional learning offer.

The **Northern Alliance COVID-19 Transitions Framework** was developed in response to the global pandemic, based on principles from Prof. Aline-Wendy Dunlop. The framework **supported children, parents and education staff** in the transition to school or ELC during the significantly challenging period. Cohorts of practitioners have also engaged in Transitions CLPL providing opportunity to collaborate and share tools to use in their own contexts in t.

The development of the **Secondary Subject Support Groups** (SSGs) has seen increased engagement with secondary practitioners in RIC activity. Established to provide **opportunities to connect, share ideas, experiences and learn together**, the SSGs have achieved 916 memberships across 26 groups (and still rising) - each one shaped by the needs of the specific group. SSG CLPL events have been hosted on areas such as BGE tracking and monitoring, and development work on moderation has also featured. The groups are also self-sustaining with members taking lead roles in management and facilitation.

[Click here to read the Curriculum Workstream 2021-22 Progress & Impact Report](#)

Raising Attainment and Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap

Activities developed by the workstream focussed initially on raising awareness and understanding around the relationship between child poverty and educational attainment. Given the challenges posed by COVID-19 for families and learners, a series of collaborative professional learning sessions were developed around the theme of equity. [Promoting Equity Week](#) saw 598 people sign up to online sessions resulting in increased awareness, knowledge and understanding, as reported by practitioners.

These wide ranging engagements built the foundations for further areas of improvement over the phase 3 plan in **collaboration with partners locally, regionally and nationally**. This has included joint activity with Education Scotland and working with schools to further develop approaches to quality improvement. There has been a focus on trying out new and innovative ways of working, creating meaningful measures and looking at our data over time in order to improve outcomes for all learners.

Equalities

Over the course of the phase 3 plan, the Equalities workstream has focused on increasing **practitioner engagement and sharing practice**, as evidenced through the [Include-Me! professional learning series](#). Resources and webinar recordings from the live event were made available for asynchronous use and learning, resulting in increased accessibility to these professional learning resources. This [store of information](#) also hosts another key development facilitated by this workstream - the Northern Alliance [Include-Me](#) policy and guidance, **led by young people, for young people**. This is an effective tool in supporting schools and services to develop an inclusive culture.

Community Learning and Development

The CLD Workstream has continued to develop over Phase 3, building on the foundations of the pre-existing CLD North Alliance network. Feedback from Workstream members has highlighted a reduction in professional isolation, **enhanced peer support and joint working and sharing of resources**. Development of baseline information and new sector driven key performance indicators has given the network the opportunity share practice and learning, as well as fine tune activity in line with policy and strategy at both regional and national level.

In collaboration with the North Sea Commission, young people from across the Northern Alliance came together with young people from regions around the North Sea basin. This [forum for collaborative action](#) amongst young people provided the basis for **collective action towards developing Youth Participation Structures**.

Click here to read the Raising Attainment & Closing the Gap 2021-22 Workstream Progress & Impact

Click here to read the Equalities Workstream 2021-22 Progress & Impact

Click here to read the CLD Workstream 2021-22 Progress & Impact Report

Sustaining Education in our Communities

Learning Estates

The Learning Estates strand of the Sustaining Education in our Communities Workstream has evolved through the Phase 3 plan. An initial audit highlighted the variation across local authorities in relation to processes and understanding of key elements within learning estate provision. Workstream activity has been focused on building a shared understanding of how we can make best use of our learning estate to enhance learning and teaching.

The greatest success of the workstream has been the **collaborative approach and capacity building** across and within authorities that have engaged. Authorities have developed **sustainable processes and knowledge** including strengthening relationships across services within the authority to develop a holistic approach to improving the learning estate. This collaborative activity has also resulted in the development of Northern Alliance Learning Estate toolkits



[Click here to read the Sustaining Education in our Communities Workstream 2021-22 Progress & Impact Report](#)

e-Learning

Progress with the Phase 3 plan has been rapid in terms of delivering quality services at a time of crisis. The introduction of the Digital DHT Team in 2020 set the foundations for an increased focus on addressing the digital barriers faced by our learners across the Northern Alliance. The covid-19 pandemic had a direct impact on the original vision for the team, swiftly catapulting activity to delivering quality services at a time of crisis as part of e-Sgoil and the wider National e-Learning Offer. However, this activity resulted in a significant increase in the number of learners and practitioners engaging with digital technology to enhance learning and teaching. In addition, this workstream worked alongside teachers to develop skills in digital pedagogy.

Our approaches to e-learning have developed at pace as a result of the pandemic, and this learning now needs to be captured through the development of a digital learning strategy in partnership with stakeholders across the Northern Alliance which will meet the needs of our 21st Century learners moving forward.

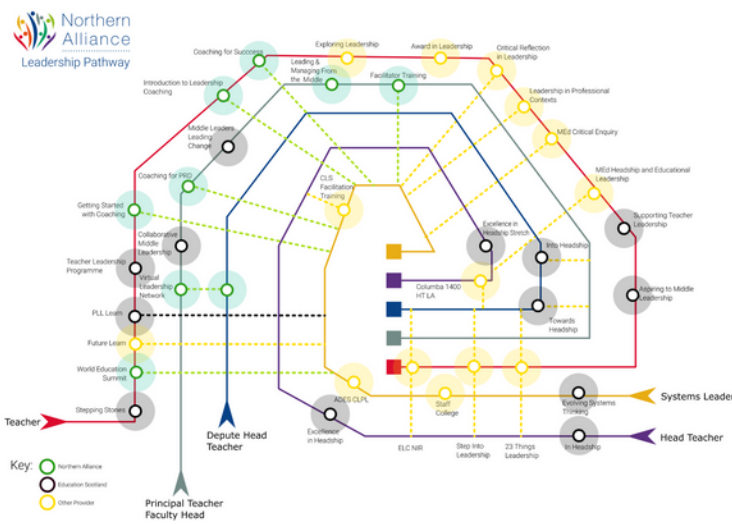


[Click here to read the e-Learning Workstream 2021-22 Progress & Impact Report](#)

Leadership

The Leadership Workstream has seen a number of successes over the course of Phase 3 focusing on developing and building leadership capacity at all levels, increasing opportunities for colleagues to access and participate in collaborative leadership learning, and building a culture of self-improving schools/settings across the Northern Alliance.

Professional learning opportunities offered over the 3-year plan have seen hundreds of practitioners over numerous sessions and cohorts participate and complete courses in aspects of coaching as well as other sessions including facilitation skills; using logic models to implement change; and leading learning and renewal in our schools and organisations.



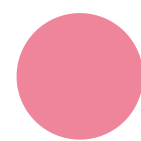
A Northern Alliance Leadership Development Pathway

was designed to support teachers and practitioners at all stages of their career access the right professional learning, at the right time, to develop as a leader in a range of contexts. This sits alongside local authority leadership frameworks to identify regional and national opportunities that exist that may compliment school/setting/authority based leadership development activities and opportunities. Access the Leadership Pathway [here](#).

In the final year of the plan, the **Northern Alliance School Improvement Project: Driving Improvement from Within**, has provided the focus of activity. Using Michael Fullan’s Four Right Drivers for Whole System Success, Improvement Partners and schools from across the Northern Alliance have explored the drivers in their context and identified key priorities to work on and plan for improvement.



Working Together to Drive Forward Improvement - Additional Activity



The final year of the phase 3 Regional Improvement Plan has been another significant year of development and collaborative activity across the Northern Alliance. See below highlighted activity and links to full Workstream Progress and Impact reports for 2021-22.

TAKING THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE TO THE WORLD STAGE

An important development within our professional learning offer has been the introduction of free access to the World Education Summit for Northern Alliance practitioners over the past two sessions. This includes a 4-day event hosted online with world leading educationalists and researchers, providing high quality professional learning workshops, keynotes and Q&A sessions. Practitioners can access recordings of the live sessions via Summit Central, alongside professional learning resources until March 2023. A Northern Alliance guide has been created signposting key sessions linked to the phase 4 plan and Michael Fullan's Right Drivers.

In March 2022, the work of the Northern Alliance was presented as part of this year's Osiris World Education Summit. Quality Improvement Manager, Kathleen Johnston, presented alongside Michael Fullan on *'Digging Deeper into the Right Drivers for Whole System Success'* and reflections were shared on engaging with the Right Drivers. This session was a fantastic opportunity for us to share our learning and for our story to be heard by educators across the world.



Colleagues from e-Sgoil also presented at the event sharing how they have been *'Removing Barriers for all Learners.'* The team explained how the work of e-Sgoil has evolved since its inception, focussing on improving access to learning for young people in rural areas, to now specialising in overcoming hurdles with young people whose mental or physical health has made in-school learning difficult. The session provided an opportunity for attendees to hear the rich learning shared and consider how this could be applied in other contexts, reflecting on how barriers impact on learning and if the curricular offer in an area or setting is driven by the learner or the institution.



Recordings of all the WES 2022 sessions are available to view from Summit Central for registered Northern Alliance practitioners.

DATA FOR IMPROVEMENT

Building on our collaboration with the **Data for Children Collaborative (with UNICEF)** and partners, we have been drawing on the variety of Phase One outputs and exploring next steps for Phase Two. In early December 2021, we connected with the **South East Improvement Collaborative** and we have realised a shared ambition for developing innovative approaches towards data for improvement.



Ultimately, we want to make sure that schools and services have access to the right data, presented at the right level, in the right way in order to better equip them to apply the most appropriate interventions to get it right for every child. Working alongside each other, the Northern Alliance, South East Improvement Collaborative, Education Scotland and the Data for Children Collaborative (with UNICEF), will aim to develop better uses of data and build capability in our schools and settings in order to effectively use data to improve outcomes for children and young people.

A joint steering group has developed four workstreams to help operationalise and develop the key components for success and these workstreams will draw on the key outputs from Phase One, such as the map of wider data sets and the blueprints of a potential data tool.

YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP

Established in session 21-22, the **Youth Advisory Group (YAG)** brings together young people, including MSYPs, from existing groups from all eight Local Authorities. Members of the YAG range in age from 11 to 26 and they are all keen to play an active role in how the Northern Alliance continues to develop. We are currently exploring opportunities to increase involvement and engagement with workstream activity.

The YAG is supported by **Voices in Action**, a group of Youth Participation Leads who meet regularly to champion youth voice across the Local Authorities. The group have been establishing a baseline picture of youth participation across the Northern Alliance and identifying mechanisms for youth voice.



TOWARDS A FUTURE VISION FOR SCOTTISH EDUCATION: A COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATION

In May 2022, the Northern Alliance participated in a mini conference hosted by University of Aberdeen with keynote from Prof. Ken Muir. Shaped around the themes **Interdependence, Inclusion and Improvement**, members of the Northern Alliance seconded team shared learning with practitioners and colleagues at the Northern Alliance Learning Hub, both virtually and in-person.



Kirsty Campbell (Argyll and Bute) explored the **importance of agency, learning networks and belongingness**, highlighting the development of the Secondary Subject Support Groups. This included direct testimony from practitioners who are members of these groups.

Jo Kirby (Moray Council) highlighted the importance of inclusion, specifically the shared and interconnected issues that need to be tackled in order to **break down barriers to equity and deepen connections to wellbeing and learning**.



In the final presentation Audrey Buchanan (Moray Council) and Tom Webster (Aberdeenshire Council) shared collaborative enquiry work which was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With a focus around research based pedagogy through the lens of digital technology, they highlighted how they have been working together to improve pedagogy and practice through the **Northern Alliance Innovative Approaches to Curriculum group**.

Shaping the Phase 4 Plan

Towards the end of 2021, we began engaging with practitioners and colleagues across the Northern Alliance to increase awareness of Fullan's Four Right Drivers for Whole System Success and to begin to think about how these Drivers could be used to shape and structure the next Regional Improvement Plan.

Through a special edition newsletter and featured days in our December 'Snow and Tell' activity, we began to develop a shared understanding of what the Right Drivers look like in the Northern Alliance context.

Between January - March 2021, live engagement sessions were hosted in each of the Northern Alliance local authorities with Head Teacher groups and central teams, workstream networks, Education Scotland Northern Team colleagues, and groups of children and young people. The sessions provided an opportunity for practitioners and professionals to reflect on the Right Drivers in their own context asking the question 'What Matters to You?' against each Driver and emerging themes.



To support the sessions, emerging themes and reflective questions were provided under each of the Drivers; Wellbeing and Learning; Social Intelligence; Equality Investments; and Systemness; with jamboards being used to gather feedback. Across the live sessions, **1,459 contributions, thoughts and ideas were shared by over 460 stakeholders.**

Working Together Across the Northern Alliance


What Matters to Us?

Use this Jamboard to share what matters to you within the key themes from each Driver. Your ideas can shape the next Plan.

Use the sticky notes to add your thoughts and ideas.






Wellbeing and Learning
slides 2-5

Social Intelligence
slides 6-9



Equality Investments
slides 10-13

Systemness
slides 14-18



An asynchronous version of the engagement was also developed using an [interactive Thinglink](#) to take the reader on a journey to find out about each Driver and then provide feedback via an online questionnaire. A thorough thematic analysis of the data gathered from the engagement process has been carried out in collaboration with the Education Scotland Northern Team to identify clear themes for each driver which reflect what matters to colleagues within schools, settings and teams across the Northern Alliance.



We also engaged with senior officers to organise local authority priorities under each of the Drivers as well as relevant national priorities. As a result, golden threads have helped us to develop core priorities for our phase 4 plan which we can all connect to, and which will help us move forward together – as described by Michael Fullan:

'I define systemness as the degree to which more and more people at each of the three levels (local, middle, and top) become aware of and interact with people within in and across their levels in relation to common goals of improving learning and well-being.'

Read the next Regional Improvement Phase 4 Plan published in Autumn 2022 for details of how we plan to use the drivers to take forward the next phase of improvement activity across our RIC.



REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

Phase 4 Plan
2022-2025



Northern
Alliance

.....



Images courtesy of Northern Alliance Local Authorities:

Aberdeen City Council

Aberdeenshire Council

Argyll & Bute Council

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Highland Council

Moray Council

Orkney Islands Council

Shetland Islands Council

FOREWORD

On behalf of the Northern Alliance Convention of Convenors, I am pleased to share the Phase 4 Plan for our Regional Improvement Collaborative. The 2022-2025 Plan sets out how we, the Northern Alliance, will continue on our journey of collaboration and improvement with all of our learners at the heart of activity.

As the Phase 3 plan has concluded, we have carried many lessons forward with us. This is complemented by the fact that we have aimed to meaningfully co-construct how we move forward by getting to the heart of what matters to you.



I am delighted to see the rich content of the discussions from across the region reflected in the Phase 4 regional improvement priorities.






As part of that process of co-construction, we were able to engage and draw upon the voices and experiences of children and young people directly in the formulation of this plan. Our learners are our greatest asset and through this next phase of regional working, we want our learners to become agents of change.

The priorities and processes within the phase 4 plan form our treasure map which will guide us toward collective improvement as a system. We are all part of the Northern Alliance 'system'- our learners, parents and partners, as well as our local authority staff members who work hard to get it right for every child, every day. By engaging in this plan and working together across every school, nursery and education service, we can build a strong, clear voice across the Northern Alliance so that we can influence current Scottish Education developments and ultimately, improve outcomes for all our learners.

Councillor Gillian Owen, Convention of Convenors Chair



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INTRODUCTION

The Northern Alliance is a Regional Improvement Collaborative between eight local authorities, across the North and West of Scotland: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar (Western Isles), Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands, with a shared vision to improve the educational and life chances of all our learners.

Unique to the Northern Alliance is its diversity with a mix of urban, remote and rural and island Local Authorities. Covering 58.4% of the landmass of Scotland, the Northern Alliance is the largest RIC in geographical size, yet represents a small percentage of the Scottish population. The geography and common challenges experienced across the region moved the collaborative to identify new ways of working and adopt a shared approach to the communities it represents in the North and West of Scotland and the islands.



Originally coming together to collectively tackle a shared challenge of teacher recruitment and retention, the Northern Alliance remains committed to improving outcomes through collaboration, closing the gap which exists across our wide and varied communities.

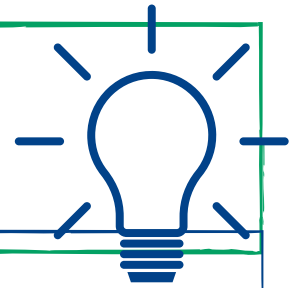
As we continue to mature as a collaborative, we are encouraged by the increasing numbers of practitioners engaging in improvement activity and opportunities to connect, sharing and mobilising practice, knowledge and experience.

With a focus on deepening connections between wellbeing and learning, the Phase 4 Plan, shaped around the Rights Drivers for Whole System success[1], sets out how we will drive forward improvement through a strong collaborative culture to create change that leads to impact for all of our learners.

Regional Improvement Forum

[1] [The Right Drivers for Whole System Success, M.Fullan](#)

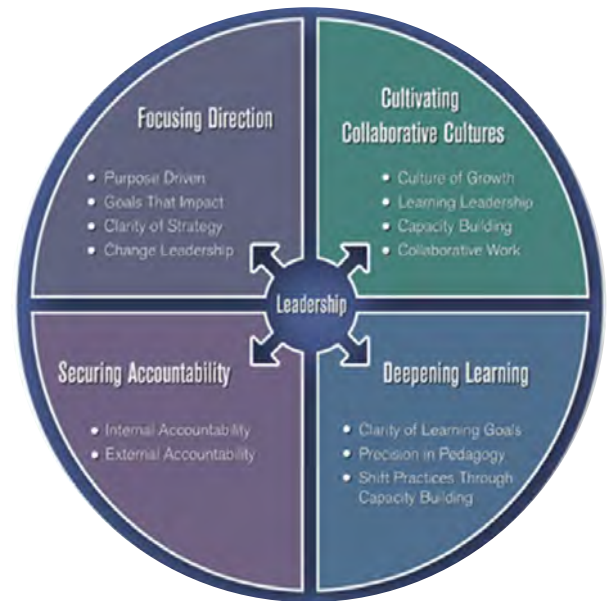
OUR STRATEGY



A Framework for Improvement

As we embark upon our Phase 4 improvement journey, we are building on learning which we have gained during previous phases of improvement. During Phase 3, we developed a strategy for improvement through collaboration which is designed to build coherence across local, regional and national policy and practice.

We make use of the four components within Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn's Coherence Framework[2] to help us create the right conditions for coherence to grow: Focusing Direction; Cultivating Collaborative Cultures; Deepening Learning; and Securing Accountability. Detail around how our improvement strategy connects with each component can be found below.



<p>Our Vision <i>Focusing Direction</i></p> <p>Developing a culture of collaboration, sharing of expertise and creating local and regional networks to improve the educational and life chances of our children and young people</p>	<p>Collaboration Framework <i>Cultivating Collaborative Cultures</i></p> <p>Developed as a form of self-evaluation, this framework, based on research and expertise, helps us collaborate meaningfully from latent to deep collaboration</p>	<p>CCITI Model <i>Deepening Learning</i></p> <p>The Northern Alliance Improvement Framework developed to support how we achieve our vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect • Collaborate • Ideas & Innovation • Try Out & Test • Improvement 	<p>Improvement Culture <i>Securing Accountability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have shared aims, with clear systems and processes to track and report on progress. There is individual and collective responsibility for achieving the aims set out within our plan. • 'Our Journey' website makes transparent our progress over time using the CCITI model.
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[2] Coherence, The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems - M. Fullan and J. Quinn

Focusing Direction starts with our vision – this ensures we remain focused on our core purpose as a Regional Improvement Collaborative, which is ultimately to improve outcomes for and with our learners through collaboration. Our improvement plan has been developed to capture what matters to our schools, settings and teams, as well as making clear the golden threads which run through local, regional and national priorities.

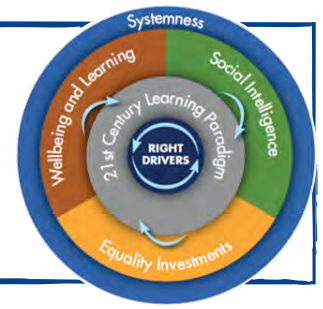
Cultivating Collaborative Cultures requires us to have a shared understanding of what it means to meaningfully collaborate - and how it leads to impact. This means that we will work on developing a collaborative culture, as well as systems and processes to support meaningful collaboration. Our Northern Alliance Collaboration Framework helps us to understand what effective collaboration looks and feels like, taking us from 'latent collaboration' to 'deep collaboration'. As our journey of collaborating meaningfully with colleagues and practitioners across the Northern Alliance continues to grow, one-off sessions and opportunities to engage are fewer, with an increased focus on collaborative and practitioner enquiry.

Deepening Learning is based on building a sense of connectedness across the Northern Alliance which helps us to share what is working well within and across our settings and teams, as well as working together to deepen our knowledge and understanding of pedagogy and breaking down the barriers to wellbeing and learning, which ultimately will lead to improved outcomes for all our learners. The five steps of the Northern Alliance CCITI Model provide the road map for our journey towards improvement. This strategy also includes the use of an improvement methodology which helps us to understand whether the changes we are making do lead to improvement.

Securing Accountability - We are building a collaborative culture that combines individual responsibility for improving outcomes for our learners, collective expectations and corrective action. We have ambitious, shared goals and robust data processes which help us monitor progress over time. We welcome the opportunity to share our progress and learning both internally as part of our own team developments, but also with local and national partners. The Northern Alliance 'Our Journey' website uses the CCITI model to make transparent our progress and learning, using both quantitative and qualitative data, with a range of case studies evidencing impact at class, school, local authority and regional level.



The Right Drivers for Whole System Success



The repercussions and ripples of the pandemic continue to impact on our schools and settings across Scotland – and will continue to do so for some time to come. It was clear as we prepared for a new phase for improvement across our RIC that we should continue to focus on wellbeing and how it impacts on learning, as well as how we can more effectively break down barriers to wellbeing and learning.

In February 2021, Michael Fullan, an expert in Whole System Change in Education, introduced the world to the Right Drivers for Whole System Success, and these connected with us at a significant time of change in Scottish education.

Over the course of session 2021/22, we have been deepening our knowledge of the Right Drivers for Whole System Success and together, we began to explore what our ‘treasure’, or key areas for improvement were emerging within each of the Drivers. Examples of putting the Drivers into practice, along with practitioners sharing their experiences can be found in Appendix 1 .

The Right Drivers for Whole System Success

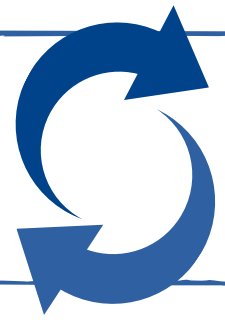
The Human Paradigm	The Bloodless Paradigm
Wellbeing and Learning	Academics Obsession
Social Intelligence	Machine Intelligence
Equality Investments	Austerity
Systemness	Fragmentation

‘Christakis analyses what he labels as ‘the immediate pandemic period’, ‘the intermediate pandemic period’ and ‘the post-pandemic period’ – a time span covering 2020 to 2024. In practical terms, humans will grapple with chaos, survival, innovative breakthroughs, destructive elements, and more. The best stance we can take is to know that almost everything will be different. In short, this prolonged ambiguity creates a tangible opportunity to make positive change happen.’ [2]

"Reflecting on progress across the Phase 3 plan, the speed and scale of the change we have seen across all levels of the system would have been incomprehensible just a few years ago. The Northern Alliance adoption of Michael Fullan's 4 Right Drivers for Whole System Success has been a valuable lens through which we can make sense of the process."

Early Years Workstream Lead

Shaping the Plan Around the Right Drivers



As we began to develop our Phase 4 Plan, it was more important than ever to ensure we focused on priorities that mattered to our teams and learners, as well as join the dots with local and national policy – focusing direction for everyone. As a Regional Improvement Collaborative, we committed to shaping our Phase 4 Plan around the Right Drivers.

Feedback from our networks informed us that the Right Drivers helped teams to focus on what was important at a time of turmoil and change - as several practitioners stated, 'They just make sense'.



What Matters to You?

The 'Right Drivers'

- Wellbeing and learning
- Social Intelligence
- Equality Investments
- Systemness

National Policy

- GIRFEC
- National Improvement Framework
- Developing the Young Workforce
- Realising the Ambition



Our Vision:

Developing a culture of collaboration, sharing of expertise and creating local and regional networks to improve the educational life chances of our children and young people

Engaging with Stakeholders - 'What Matters to You?'



In order to meaningfully engage with practitioners, partners, learners and parents, we took the drivers on the road across the Northern Alliance and asked everyone, 'What matters to you?' We used themes emerging from our work with the Right Drivers over the past session to frame our discussions.



We engaged with over 450 people and generated over 1400 pieces of feedback, which then went on to identify the themes that shape our phase 4 priorities.



In partnership with our regional colleagues from Education Scotland, we carried out a collaborative thematic analysis of the data, which involved data familiarisation, generating codes, searching for themes and naming and defining themes.[3]

Using the themes which represent what matters to our stakeholders, the next step involved working alongside our Local Authority Directors, Heads of Service and Chief Education Officers to identify the 'golden threads' that weave through Local Authority and national priorities.

These threads enabled us to focus direction and identify our new Phase 4 improvement priorities, which are shared on page 10.



[3] Braun and Clarke, 2008.

PHASE 4 PRIORITIES

The diagram below outlines the key priorities developed for each Driver Workstream.



A sample of the feedback gathered from our learners, practitioners, parents and partners is shared over the next four pages, making clear the strong connection between the voices of our stakeholders and how we plan to put these priorities into practice. Priorities with stars are shared across workstreams. Detailed plans outlining aims and measures have been included at Appendix 3.

Wellbeing and Learning

Focus for improvement within Early Years, Primary, Secondary, CLD and Digital - including Gaelic Medium:

You said...

Workstream Priorities

- Relationships built on mutual trust and respect that will support effective learner-teacher interactions
- Exemplification of creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning that will help inspire and support practitioners
- Ensure that the terminology of wellbeing is not just a word, but is immersed in practice. How can this be done effectively?

- Collegiality amongst staff - peer assessment, moderation of teaching and learning, planning and achievement of a level
- Learners voice and increasing empowerment to co-develop and design learning opportunities
- Partnerships between school, pupils and the community linked to Children's Rights
- 'Nothing for us without us'

- Is the physical school the most appropriate place for learning for every child?
- Capitalising on children's wider environment, sense of self in community, in out and beyond
- Importance of place
- Using digital to allow learners (and staff) to collaborate with others across the Northern Alliance.
- How do we use digital technology to expand the curriculum for all young people?

FEELING WELL AND LEARNING WELL:

1. Get better at making learning more meaningful - deepening connections and motivation to learn
2. Get it right for every learner through our pedagogy and culture - breaking down barriers*
3. Get better at reaching shared expectations within learning, teaching and assessment
4. Improve how we teach and learn through working together on research and improvement projects

Putting the Plan into Practice

- **Curriculum Design** - *developing pedagogical practice, skills and pathways*
- **Learner Rights and Voice** - *deepening engagement and building agency*
- **Learning, Teaching and Assessment** - *sharing and mobilising practice, breaking down barriers* and building shared expectations*
- **Collaborative Professional Enquiry** - *working together to solve problems and develop innovative approaches supported by professional learning opportunities such as the World Education Summit*

Social Intelligence

Focus for improvement within Early Years, Primary, Secondary, CLD and Digital - including Gaelic Medium:

You said...

- Create a trusting ethos in school where it is safe to share. Sharing a common language between different services
- Collaboration needs to be authentic and purposeful
- Use tools to build partnership collaboration and discussion
- Shared goals are key - and staff communicating/articulating this with each other
- Discrete focussed work on how best to create connectedness and create an ethos of collaboration.

- We are going through the pain of change. I'm learning that there is a critical mass who want to collaborate.
- Creating/managing time for people to reflect/discuss/share/support and challenge each other
- Clear communication within and between areas, with improved outcomes at the heart

- Open and honest discussion between schools. Sharing best practice and what is working. Not just in small clusters but across the authorities and Northern Alliance.
- You should work with someone who you feel safe and happy with and you can feel more confident at expressing your feelings and thoughts.
- If you are connecting with each other you will get some friends

Workstream Priorities

HOW WE WORK AND LEARN TOGETHER:

1. Build a shared understanding of how we can meaningfully collaborate
2. Increase opportunities for us to collaborate both at local level and across the Northern Alliance
3. Work together with our local authority and national partners to make a joined-up offer for professional learning

Putting the Plan into Practice

- **Professional learning opportunities** to develop a shared understanding of meaningful collaboration linking theory, policy and practice
- **Online resource hub** to support collaboration at class, school, team, cluster, local authority or regional level
- **Opportunities for online collaboration** linked to individual school/ setting/ team improvement priorities as a common theme**
- **Development and creation of an online professional learning community**, streamlining and sharing local, regional and national professional learning opportunities, providing opportunities for collaboration.

Equality Investments

Focus for improvement within Early Years, Primary, Secondary, CLD and Digital - including Gaelic Medium:

You said...

Workstream Priorities

- Working closely with parents and partners to identify barriers to learning and address these
- I would like to see a way of giving a voice to the parents who do not feel articulate or confident enough to be involved in parent forums.
- Voices from young people and families should be at the heart of planning and improvement

HOW WE BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO WELLBEING AND LEARNING:

1. Get better at working with our learners and their families so that together we can break down their barriers to wellbeing and learning*
2. Make sure we are making best use of our data, measures and money to help us improve outcomes for every learner
3. Work together to shape policy and practice and build a shared understanding of how we get it right for every learner*

- As a staff, sharing, trialling ideas and supporting each other
- Ethos – supporting and valuing differences across the school
- Rights and responsibilities around UNCRC need to be shared, accessible and understood by all
- Ensuring that we have appropriate tools to measure impact of interventions.

Putting the Plan into Practice

- **Learner and family participation** – network, share practice and engage with children and young people and partners to improve how we work with learners and their families when there are barriers to wellbeing and learning*
- **Improve access to and engagement with meaningful data** to inform improvement at class, school, team, local authority and regional level – development of a data for improvement framework in partnership with South East RIC
- **Build confidence and clarity around national policy** such as the Morgan Review, The Promise and UNCRC and work together around how we can use policy to improve our practice at class/ school/ team/ local authority level

- How will improvement be measured? It needs to show improvement rather than evaluation against a standard or against other schools
- The right data that informs our unique contexts
- If you do things by yourself it can eat you up inside. A problem shared is a problem halved. It's easier when you're working together

Systemness

Focus for improvement within Early Years, Primary, Secondary, CLD and Digital - including Gaelic Medium:

You said...

- Leadership skills are required in order to effect a collaborative approach with staff involvement and empowerment
- Recognition that leadership occurs at all levels and across all members of the learning community - children, young people, teachers, CLD staff, parents...
- Using collaboration to tackle strategically the tough challenges that persist across the years and establishing conditions for solutions to be developed

- Need to take and manage risk and be allowed to succeed or fail and then try again
- Know your setting and the culture of your community to inspire and build together
- Young people and families need to be included and equal partners at the table
- Young people being "fearless agents of their own destinies"

- Actively share and broadcast change makers success (irrespective of size) to motivate others
- Quality improvement - opportunities to work with teams on small change projects - learn what works but also learn about what doesn't work
- How do we ensure the importance of the north is really captured when national policy is being formulated?

Workstream Priorities

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE OUR SYSTEM:

1. Build collective responsibility and engagement in improving our Northern Alliance system – with and for everyone!
2. Build a shared understanding of what makes a good leader – wherever we are in our learning journey
3. Get better at working together as a team to improve we learn and how we learn

Putting the Plan into Practice

- **Professional learning and networking opportunities** to share how Fullan's Right Drivers for Whole System Success can support teams to drive forward improvement together
- **Develop and engage** with a shared set of principles for leading improvement – including culture, systems and processes
- **Opportunities to connect and collaborate** with schools / settings/ teams with similar improvement priorities**
- **Work together** to create the conditions for collective efficacy to flourish within and across our teams

Connecting with National Policy and Drivers



The Phase 4 Plan has been shaped over time by practitioners in schools, settings and teams across the Northern Alliance, as well as learners and their families. It is also influenced by local and national priorities and closely aligns with the National Improvement Framework[4] and the Scottish Attainment challenge[5].



At the core of our plan, we will work to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of every child and young person across all regional improvement activity as detailed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child[6].

We believe our phase 4 priorities will strengthen our approaches to collaboration across the Northern Alliance and ultimately improve how we work together to improve outcomes for and with every learner in the Northern Alliance. Learner rights permeate all drivers and priorities at a local, regional and national level - strong connections which will help to focus direction for everyone moving forward.

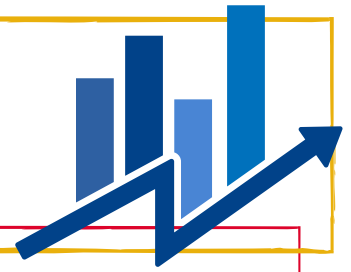


[4] [Achieving Excellence and Equity, 2022 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan](#)

[5] [The Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model – Regional/Local Level](#)

[6] [A summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

EVALUATING PROGRESS



Data Processes

Data processes developed during Phase 3 will continue to help us to understand how we are realising the ambition of our vision.

We make use of a range of measures and tools – from quantitative measures including numbers of practitioners engaging in activity to qualitative data capturing our experiences of collaboration and resulting impact on learners.

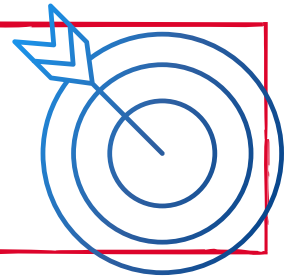
Our case studies and improvement projects capture context specific learning - sharing what works and providing the opportunity to support improvement in a range of new contexts across our Northern Alliance system.



We have a robust system to help us monitor and capture improvement activity. The Model for Improvement helps us to create aims and measures which reflect our own unique contexts. It also helps us to take a shared approach to improvement. Each month, we monitor progress towards the aims set out in our improvement plan. We are curious about our progress and if there are any problems or delays, we work together to try out and test shared theories of action. We are transparent about our data and we share our improvement progress in our dedicated site - Our Journey.

Read more about how we will evidence impact in our Theory of Action at Appendix 3.

A Targeted and Universal Approach



As a Regional Improvement Collaborative, our ultimate aim is to improve outcomes for and with our learners through collaboration and building a sense of collective responsibility. Therefore, it is important to capture improvement within the wider system as well as within our own workstreams.

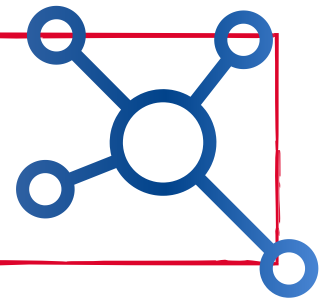
That is why we will be using targeted measures to monitor improvement at workstream level – evaluating improvement in outcomes with the teams we work with directly. But also, universal measures to understand whether our theories of action are leading to improvement in the wider system.



Some of our national measures can help us do that. But we have also identified measures which allow us to monitor collaboration and improvement in a bespoke way and to help us understand the extent to which our system is cultivating that collaborative culture we aspire to as a Regional Improvement Collaborative.



Connecting with our Local Authorities and Partners



Communication is key in creating a collaborative culture across our RIC. Throughout Phase 4 we will continue to work towards achieving our goal of deepening connections with all levels of our Northern Alliance system. We also want to ensure equitable access to opportunities to connect with fellow practitioners, and to collaborate through professional enquiry activity and professional learning.

In order to further improve communication and engagement with our phase 4 plan, members of our Northern Alliance central team have the added role of linking with one of our eight Local Authorities in order to:

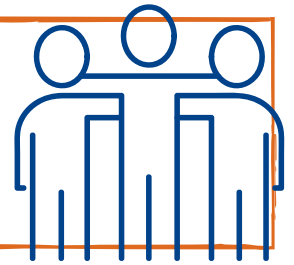
- share information on Northern Alliance activity,
- gather feedback from a local perspective on how activity is adding value; and to
- facilitate making connections and sharing practice that will support both regional and Local Authority activity.

Link Officers engage with their Local Authority Central Teams monthly, Head Teacher groups quarterly, and other practitioner/officer groups as agreed, building a more consistent approach to information sharing and gathering. In addition to local authority links, we also have officers who engage with regional and national partners and our Youth Advisory Group on a monthly basis.

Throughout Phase 4 we will also be updating our website to create a more effective information portal for practitioners and partners, as well as increasing our use of social media to enhance our reach across our RIC.



GOVERNANCE



In order to bring our plan to life, we have a strong Northern Alliance network of people to take forward our shared priorities. Detail about each of the central groups in the diagram below and be found on the next page.





Workstream Leads

A team of seconded practitioners and officers take forward improvement activity to achieve aims and priorities, each linking with members of the Education Scotland Northern Team, practitioner networks, learners and wider partners

- Wellbeing and Learning - *with a focus on Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Digital*
- Social Intelligence - *with a focus on collaboration*
- Equality Investments - *with focus on Inclusion and ASN, and Equalities and Diversity*
- Systemness - *with a focus on building agency and collective responsibility*

Project Management and Improvement

This team provides support and challenge for our workstreams in relation to progress within the Regional Improvement Plan, data analysis, budget monitoring and communication with stakeholders.

Regional Improvement Lead

The RIC Lead oversees the strategic direction of the Regional Improvement Collaborative and communicates progress at a national level. The Lead meets with the Quality Improvement Manager and Project Officer weekly.

Regional Improvement Forum

Directors, Heads of Service and Chief Education Officers from the eight Local Authorities work with the Education Scotland Senior Regional Advisor to provide support and challenge in order to drive improvement within our plan.

Youth Advisory Group

Established in late 2021, the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) captures youth voice and aims to strengthen youth participation in Northern Alliance developments. Members include MSYPs for each of our local authorities.

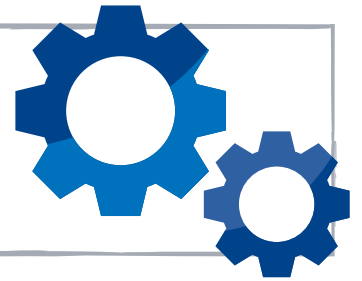
Regional Improvement Advisory Forum

Membership includes Head Teachers, Education Psychology Service, Higher Education, Unions and the Scottish Government. This group provides support and challenge in relation to progress and priorities.

Convention of Convenors

Local Authority Education Policy Leads discuss and advise on the strategy of the Northern Alliance, reviewing progress through regular updates.

Our Northern Alliance System



The above diagram shares our five workstreams, as well as advisory and governance groups which challenge and support workstream teams. Our workstreams work alongside practitioners, learners, families and partners to realise the ambitions set out within our phase 4 plan. People and processes can only come together effectively when they have a shared vision and commitment to work towards. The Right Drivers for Whole System Success work alongside our Northern Alliance vision to help us focus our direction and move forward together. Within the Right Drivers for Whole System Success, Michael Fullan describes Systemness as:

“When students, teachers, and others at the local and middle levels are helped to think differently about their systems leading to pathways of action that foster greater clarity, collaboration, and ownership of improvement.”

Our young people face yet unknown challenges and opportunities as a result of climate change and advancing technologies. We are also grappling with the repercussions of a global pandemic, as well as the uncertainties which currently exist within our education system. Never has there been such a need for us to take collective responsibility for building clarity and bringing about improvement together. Learner rights are at the heart of this Northern Alliance phase 4 plan – as are the rights of all members of our system to have their voices heard and to be active in shaping our direction. This plan is not a plea for engagement or indeed an invitation to engage, but a call to action for everyone to take collective responsibility in bringing about whole system success.



“A deliberate attempt to realize the system you are in; and the system you should want.”
Michael Fullan

APPENDIX 1 - ENGAGING WITH THE DRIVERS - VOICES FROM ACROSS THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE

Below we share examples of how we have been engaging with the Right Drivers over session 2021/22, along with practitioner feedback on their experiences. This activity will continue to be developed and scaled up over the life of the Phase 4 Plan

Wellbeing and Learning

Re-imagining your Curriculum Rationale

We have been working alongside local authority central team officers and practitioners in ELC settings, primary and secondary schools to further develop understanding of curriculum design. This includes design tools, which can be used to take forward improvement in schools and settings. Over 250 Senior Leaders and Education Officers registered to be part of the 'Re-imagining your Curriculum Rationale' sessions, with 90% of participants who responded reporting being in the process of evaluating or updating their curriculum rationales at the end of our phase 3 plan.

"I would love to go more into the drivers." - Teacher

"I would definitely like to know more about Michael Fullan's work and how to practically use it to develop a curriculum rationale." Head Teacher

"It took me a few weeks to get into the training. I thought it would be more about areas of the curriculum and how we could ensure we were using them to meet the needs of the children [but] ... I feel we learned about how we as a staff team can improve our own practice to make things better for children." - ELC Practitioner



"It has been really valuable to connect across the Region with other remote establishments." ELC Practitioner

Interdisciplinary Learning Network

A dedicated interdisciplinary network further strengthens collaboration by providing opportunities to discuss and share practice. This has included a focus on ASN and relationships in the context of curriculum and interdisciplinary learning.

Hear from one Head of Primary about her experience of the IDL network [here](#). A Secondary Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher also share their experience [here](#).

A graphic titled 'IDL' (Interdisciplinary Learning) on a lined paper background. It features a central diagram with four colored quadrants: 'Opportunities for personal achievement' (orange), 'Interdisciplinary learning' (green), 'Ethos and life of the school as a community' (purple), and 'Curriculum areas and subjects' (blue). The quadrants are connected by a central white shape. Above the diagram are three speech bubbles containing the words 'Why?', 'What?', and 'How?'. To the right, under the heading 'Interdisciplinary Learning', there is a list of bullet points: 'An opportunity to refocus on IDL and what it can offer our children and young people.', 'Look at the 'Why, What and How' of IDL.', 'Schools and Partners will share how they are being ambitious through the development of bold IDL experiences.', and 'Facilitated discussion and networking.' The Northern Alliance Professional Learning logo is in the top right corner.

Re-imagining your Skills Agenda

Northern Alliance professional learning resource called 'Reimagining your Skills Agenda', has been co-designed by Senior Leaders, Education Officers, Education Scotland, Teachers, DYW Co-ordinators, DYW Lead officers, Skills Development Scotland and CLD practitioners. This resource is based on the research of Michael Fullan's Right Drivers for Whole System Success and has been designed to support practitioners with evaluating and updating their skills frameworks. The resource was tested with a small cohort, which led to further refinements. The professional learning is designed as a series of four inputs, followed by a 'sharing successes' event to share progress with colleagues and discuss next steps.


"It is just so good to hear what others are doing"
Head Teacher

"Really enjoyed the discussions and the opportunity to discuss possible ways forward"
Teacher

Retrieval Practice: Leveraging Digital Using Research-informed Practice

During the pandemic a group of teachers from a variety of contexts; primary and secondary, rural and urban, English and Gaelic medium, met regularly online. They considered retrieval practice and how digital tools could enhance the teaching and learning in their settings. They reflected together on their small 'tests of change' as they implemented in their own classrooms new pedagogies and ways of working. Their experiences as a result of collaborative improvement are shared in an [e-book](#).

"With my P3 class, retrieval practice offers more than just improved memorisation skills, it secures that the learning is long term and it also increases their understanding."
Primary Teacher



"The Northern Alliance curriculum skills CLPL co-design process has been an open, progressive and well led exercise – recognising that the curriculum doesn't operate in a vacuum. For a senior phase curriculum to have currency it must be relevant to (and designed around those it purports to serve) young people, the economy they are entering and wider community. This open, inclusive and data-informed Northern Alliance curriculum design process thus was in accord with Prof Muir's 'Putting learners at the centre' report, recently endorsed by the Scottish Government."
Education Support Officer

DYW Live



"Working with e-Sgoil on DYW Live has allowed hundreds of young people to gain access to role models from the world of work and gain and insight into jobs and industry. This has helped inform, inspire, educate them in what subject choices to make, what skills are needed for particular jobs and made what they learn in the classroom relevant. Real people – real stories."
Founders4Schools



1+2 Language Development Workstream

"It is vital that this type of collaboration continues and develops to provide the best opportunities and support for all learners, families and practitioners in our authorities."

Languages Teacher



World Education Summit

The World Education Summit is a key professional learning resource funded for practitioners in schools and settings across the Northern Alliance. Moving forward into Phase 4, we will be connecting and collaborating within and across schools to tease out some of the many themes shared within this resource and test out some of the ideas shared within our own contexts. Collaboration with the Welsh Government and with Osiris Educational has been key to planning for implementation and engagement. A [Northern Alliance WES Toolkit](#) has been created to help colleagues navigate the site, host collaborative learning events and signpost to key sessions linked to the phase 4 plan and Michael Fullan's Right Drivers. In collaboration with the 8 local authorities, signposting guides have been created linking the sessions to local authority improvement priorities.



You can hear about one Depute Head Teacher's experience of engaging with the World Education Summit [here](#)



How are we deepening our collaborations?

"The best collaborative approach that I have been part of. The structure of the process, the inclusive nature of sessions and quality of content shared are key features which stand out. I really hope to bring and contribute these qualities to collaborative approaches I am part of in the future."

Secondary DHT



Breakfast Cart Project

"When I first started as head teacher, I noticed that throughout the school there were children being taken out of class every morning for something to eat. There were wee groups of children having toast every day. Every teacher had a cupboard with breakfast bars and crisps to give to children who were hungry or had not had snack. They had bought these with their own money. I noticed too that some children were too shy or embarrassed to ask. I decided to look into how we could give breakfast to everyone. Now I know that every child in my school has access to something to fill their tummy first thing every day. Children can have as much or as little as they need. Parents are happy too. One recently said that it was hard getting her son out of bed in the morning but knowing he got breakfast in school was one worry less"

Head Teacher

"The approach taken by this school where every pupil is offered a free breakfast will be a model worth following. The research being undertaken by SPIRU at Glasgow Caledonian University has the potential to add knowledge and understanding to national policy and development."

Poverty and Inequality Commissioner



"We really look forward to continuing to work with our partners in the Northern Alliance and finding ways we can collaborate to provide useful and impactful learning that continues to promote equity in our schools."

Project Officer, CPAG

Collaborative Enquiry

"Really insightful and thought provoking...got me thinking about my role as a teacher, the struggles families face and how we can best support. A common theme in many schools so feel it is so important."

Teacher

"Having a mentor, hearing about the learning of other settings, learning about research methodologies. Making us mindful of using these tools for improvement and measuring impact – no matter how small."

Teacher



School Improvement Project - Driving Improvement from Within

By using the Right Drivers as a 'lens for improvement', our school teams have been working together to consider what they can do together to improve outcomes for and with their learners whilst grappling with the challenges of change, uncertainty - and post pandemic! In doing so, there is a focus on building approaches to collaboration and improvement - with the intention of driving improvement from within.

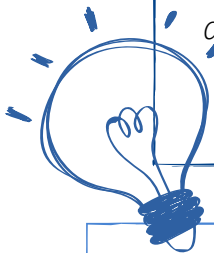
"The school has made use of inservice time to explore the drivers and the investment in different stakeholders is beginning to pay off. Drivers are featuring within our school's improvement planning process."
Central Team Officer

"Initially the staff were quite sceptical about the project and saw it as just another thing. But the self evaluation process using the Right Drivers has engaged colleagues, leading to great collaboration and agreed outcomes. Staff are also clear about the improvement they want to see."
Head Teacher

"Working parties are positively engaging in the process of change and leading this/ being accountable for their part in this. It feels like as a team we are making progress."
Head Teacher

"What's really powerful about this project is the focus on clear thinking - really understanding deeply before deciding what is needed. Taking time to do it well, something we often underestimate the importance of. This approach is about deep and sustainable change and in this way it is also energising and empowering educators in a different way. We've talked a lot about recovery over the last couple of years, but I think this is about renewal."
Sarah Philp, Coach | Psychologist

"I think the impact of this work is that it has made all staff think carefully about how to embed improvements and be invested in the next steps of the school and improvement priorities. I think it has made us all think carefully about ensuring actions are well planned and thought out to ensure maximum impact"
Head Teacher



APPENDIX 2 - DRIVER WORKSTREAM OVERVIEWS

Wellbeing and Learning - Learning well and feeling well

Priority	NA Context - What will success look like?	Measurable Aim	NIF Driver(s)	SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes
1. Get better at making learning more meaningful - deepening connections and motivation to learn	Outcomes for learners are improved through a relevant and meaningful curriculum that promotes wellbeing and learning. Learners feel well and are more involved in their learning, developing skills to be good at learning and good at life.	95% of learners attending schools or settings which are engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream will demonstrate improved wellbeing and learning outcomes* through a relevant and meaningful curriculum by Feb 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum and Assessment School and ELC Improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements in engagement, attendance, confidence and wellbeing of children and young people An embedded culture and ethos based on educational equity exists in the education system that promotes high aspirations and recognises broader achievement for all children and young people and their families
2. Get it right for every learner through our pedagogy and culture - breaking down barriers*	Mental and emotional wellbeing, children's rights and learner voice are central to all we do. Learning environments put learners at the centre. Learners feel safe, included, valued and heard.	95% of learners attending schools or settings which are engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream demonstrate an improvement in their wellbeing* by Feb 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum and Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedded engagement and participation of children and young people, families and communities in the learner journey
3. Get better at reaching shared expectations within learning, teaching and assessment	Collaboration at regional and local level is the platform where we come together to explore and share practice. There is a consistent and shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching, assessment and moderation practices. We feel confident, connected and there is greater consistency in expectations and standards. This will lead to improved outcomes for learners.	<p>95% of learners attending schools or settings which are engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream demonstrate improved outcomes* as a result of moderation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment by Feb 2025.</p> <p>95% of practitioners engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream report increased confidence in their professional judgements by Feb 2025.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and ELC Improvement Curriculum and Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality learning, teaching and assessment, focussing on achieving equity for learners, across Health and Wellbeing, literacy and numeracy Evidence based approaches embedded in the system with continuous refinement/ adaptation based on effective interventions in the local context.

Priority	NA Context - What will success look like?	Measurable Aim	NIF Driver(s)	SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes
4. Get better at making learning more meaningful - deepening connections and motivation to learn	We are more engaged in professional enquiry to improve pedagogical practice and model a strong commitment to lifelong learning. This culture supports learners and practitioners to be 'good at learning, good at life.'	95% of learners attending schools or settings which are engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream demonstrate improved outcomes* as a result of experiencing effective pedagogies and practices by Feb 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong leadership in the education system, using skills developed through continuous professional learning focused on equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
		95% of practitioners engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream who report a strong commitment to lifelong learning through collaborative professional enquiry by Feb 2025.		

Social Intelligence - How we work and learn together

Priority	NA Context - What will success look like?	Measurable Aim	NIF Driver(s)	SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes
1. Build a shared understanding of how we can meaningfully collaborate within and across classes, schools, teams	There is system wide awareness of and engagement with the Northern Alliance Vision: Members of our RIC can cohesively communicate and apply collaborative practice, theory and policy to improve learner outcomes	By Feb 2025, 95% of practitioners engaging with Social Intelligence Workstream will have a shared understanding of meaningful collaboration*, aligned with the Northern Alliance Collaboration Framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and ELC Leadership Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic collaboration across the education system results in innovative, impactful and sustainable approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
2. Increase opportunities for collaboration both at local level and across the Northern Alliance	Collaborative activity is always focused on improving outcomes for learners. Increased numbers of practitioners are collaborating across the Northern Alliance to bring about improvement.	By Feb 2025, 90% of schools participating in "Active Collaboration" projects will report improved wellbeing and learning experiences* for learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and ELC Improvement Parent/ Carer Involvement and Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality learning, teaching and assessment, focussing on achieving equity for learners, across Health and Wellbeing, literacy and numeracy

Priority	NA Context - What will success look like?	Measurable Aim	NIF Driver(s)	SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes
3. Work together with our local authority and national partners to make a joined-up offer for professional learning	Practitioners from across the Northern Alliance can access a cohesive and accessible professional learning offer in collaboration with our 8 Local Authorities and national partners.	By Feb 2025, an online professional learning community platform will be created and developed in collaboration with our 8 Local Authorities and national partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and ELC Leadership Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic collaboration across the education system results in innovative, impactful and sustainable approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
		By Feb 2025, 80% of practitioners engaging in the professional learning community platform will share practice, learning and impact* with other members of the platform		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic collaboration across the education system results in innovative, impactful and sustainable approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap

Equality Investments - How we break down the barriers to wellbeing and learning

Priority	NA Context - What will success look like?	Measurable Aim	NIF Driver(s)	SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes
1. Make sure we are making best use of our data, measures and money to help us improve outcomes for and with every learner	Increased competence and confidence in using data for improvement system wide – evidenced in SAC2 and improved outcomes for learners. Teams make more effective use of data to improve outcomes from within our own settings. As a result of professional learning and sharing practice, confidence and competence in data for improvement increases and leads to improved outcomes for learners.	Completion of a Regional Data for Improvement Framework in partnership with SEIC RIC by 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and ELC Leadership Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An embedded use of data and evidence is used to build and share an understanding of effective interventions in closing the poverty-related attainment gap
		By Feb 2025, 95% of practitioners engaging with the Equality Investments workstream report improved outcomes for learners as a result of increased confidence and capacity in their use of data for improvement		

Priority	NA Context - What will success look like?	Measurable Aim	NIF Driver(s)	SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes
2. Get better at working with our learners and families so that together we can break down their barriers to wellbeing and learning	Schools and settings work in genuine partnership with children, young people and parents, as well as wider partners. Each partner's voice is heard, respected and is used to inform next steps. There is stronger collaboration in order to break down barriers to wellbeing and learning	By Feb 2025, 90% of participants* engaging in improvement activity within the EI workstream will report their experience of participation as good or better. *Parents, carers, children and young people, adult learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/ Carer Involvement & Engagement • Curriculum and Assessment • Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young people at the centre of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded engagement and participation of children and young people, families and communities in the learner journey. • An embedded culture and ethos based on educational equity exists in the education system that promotes high aspirations and recognises broader achievement for all children and young people and their families
3. Work together to shape policy and practice and build a shared understanding of how we get it right for every learner*	All practitioners are clear about learners' rights in relation to policy - e.g., UNCRC, The Promise, Morgan Review. Policy and practice work together to break down barriers to wellbeing and learning and meet individual needs.	By Feb 2025 95% of establishments engaging across the Equality Investments workstream will demonstrate clear evidence* of putting learners at the centre with a particular focus on Policy and Practice <i>Where evidence is demonstrated through case studies.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/ Carer Involvement and Engagement • Curriculum and Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence based approaches embedded in the system with continuous refinement/ adaptation based on effective interventions in the local context.

Systemness - Working together to improve our system

Priority	NA Context - What will success look like?	Measurable Aim	NIF Driver(s)	SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes
1. Build collective responsibility for and engagement in improving our Northern Alliance system – with and for everyone!	Engagement with the Right Drivers for Whole System Success across the RIC - leading to increased levels of agency and engagement in improvement activity. Systems and processes also support improvement.	By Feb 2025 95% of participants in the Systemness Workstream will report increased agency and engagement in improvement activity within and across schools/settings and teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and ELC Improvement • Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism • Parent/carer involvement and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded engagement and participation of children and young people, families and communities in the learner journey.

Priority	NA Context - What will success look like?	Measurable Aim	NIF Driver(s)	SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes
<p>2. Build a shared understanding of what makes a good leader of improvement – wherever we are in our learning journey</p>	<p>There is a shared understanding of effective leadership of improvement across the RIC. Leaders at all levels promote a culture of learning and improvement and as a result, there is deeper engagement in improvement activity within and across teams</p>	<p>By Feb 2025, 95% participants within the Systemness Workstream will report deeper engagement of stakeholders* in school/setting/ team improvement plans, leading to improved outcomes for learners <i>*Staff, learners, parents/carers, community members</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and ELC Improvement • Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism • Parent/carer involvement and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership in the education system, using skills developed through continuous professional learning focused on equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
<p>3. Get better at working together as a team to improve where we learn and how we learn</p>	<p>Evidence of increased collective efficacy within teams across the RIC, resulting in shared high expectations for and with learners and improved outcomes. Collective responsibility for improvement is growing.</p>	<p>By Feb 2025 95% of practitioners engaging with the Systemness Workstream will report increased collective efficacy* in their schools/ settings / teams, leading to improved outcomes for learners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and ELC Leadership • Curriculum and Assessment • Teacher and Practitioner Professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic collaboration across the education system results in innovative, impactful and sustainable approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

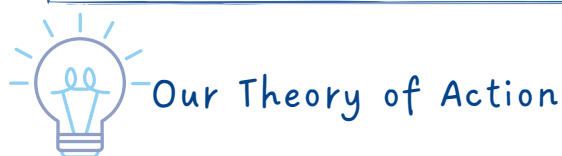
APPENDIX 3 - FINDING OUR TREASURE - OUR THEORY OF ACTION

Outlined below is the Northern Alliance theory of action for our Phase 4 Plan. Input from practitioners from across the Northern Alliance has helped to shape this theory of action, with the Right Drivers at its heart. Practitioner comments from our engagement sessions show how this theory can be brought to life and have its potential unleashed :

Northern Alliance Vision

'Developing a culture of collaboration, sharing of expertise, and creating local and regional networks to improve the educational and life chances of our learners.'

"Openness, transparency, regular opportunities to discuss and evaluate what aspects are working well/not as successful and ways forward – collaborative approach but with direction and purpose." Head Teacher



The Northern Alliance Phase 3 plan has helped us to set the foundations for collaborative improvement. We have a better understanding of how we can meaningfully collaborate. Our relationships are stronger and many networks of practitioners have experienced the benefits of working together. We have begun to see the impact of meaningful collaboration on outcomes for learners through our growing bank of case studies.

"A 'case study' approach to problem solving where collaboration is focussed on meeting the needs of individual learners."
e-Sgoil Team Member

As a result, the phase 4 plan has been designed to step up a gear. Our sights are now firmly set on evidencing the impact of collaborative improvement on our learners. The plan sets out how we are going to realise our Northern Alliance vision over the next three years. Supporting us to achieve this, we have identified priorities for us to achieve which are driven forward by each of Michael Fullan's Right Drivers for Whole System Success:

- Wellbeing and Learning – feeling well and learning well
- Social Intelligence – how we work and learn together
- Equality Investments – breaking down the barriers to wellbeing and learning
- Systemness – working together to improve our system



"When goals involve new challenges, how can you possibly know if it is achievable, if it is realistic, and how long it will take you to achieve? In the absence of such knowledge, it may be better to set a learning goal or a broader performance goal that expresses your shared commitments and helps keep focused."

Viviane Robinson, Student Centred Leadership



Targeted Measures

Targeted measures help us to monitor improvement activity in relation to our driver priorities. Phase 4 priorities are set out within each driver workstream plan. Driver teams have developed aims and outcome measures for each priority which help us to understand whether theories of action lead to improved outcomes for and with our learners.

Wellbeing and Learning - Learning well and feeling well

Priority	Outcome Measure	Operational Definition	Data Collection Method
1. Get better at making learning more meaningful - deepening connections and motivation to learn	<p>Percentage of learners demonstrating improved wellbeing and learning outcomes* connected to the design of the curriculum.</p> <p>*Engagement, Attendance Confidence, Wellbeing QI 2.2</p>	<p>Numerator: number of learners demonstrating improved wellbeing and learning outcomes</p> <p>Denominator: number of learners within the school or setting's associated engagement group</p> <p>"wellbeing and learning outcomes":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement • Attendance • Confidence • Wellbeing <p>HGIOS QI 2.2 -Curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft form – baseline, mid and end point data collection • QI 2.2 Progress reported by teams before and after collaborative activity
2. Get it right for every learner through our pedagogy and culture - breaking down barriers*	<p>Percentage of learners demonstrating improvements in wellbeing and agency*</p> <p>*Feeling safe, included, valued and heard.</p> <p>QI 3.1</p>	<p>Numerator: number of learners demonstrating improvements in wellbeing.</p> <p>Denominator: number of learners within the school /setting/ learning space associated engagement group</p> <p>"Wellbeing and agency": feeling safe, included, valued and heard. Learners report increased wellbeing and agency in all domains of the student learning model. (likert scale)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft form- baseline, mid and end point data collection • QI 3.1 -Progress reported by teams before and after collaborative activity
3. Get better at reaching shared expectations within learning, teaching and assessment	<p>Percentage of learners demonstrating improved wellbeing and learning* outcomes as a result of moderation of learning, teaching and assessment.</p> <p>*Attainment and achievement – national measures</p>	<p>Numerator: number of learners demonstrating improved outcomes as a result of moderation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment.</p> <p>Denominator: number of learners within the school / setting/ learning space associated engagement group</p> <p>HGIOS QI 2.3 – Learning, Teaching and Assessment HGIOS QI 3.2 – Raising Attainment and Achievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACEL data (P1, P4, P7, S3) • Data on Senior Phase Qualification Awards • Sustained Positive School Leaver destination • QI 2.3 and 3.2 - Progress reported by teams before and after collaborative activity • Feedback from Youth Advisory Group and National Parent Forum.

Priority	Outcome Measure	Operational Definition	Data Collection
	Percentage of practitioners engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream who report increased confidence in their professional judgements	<p>Numerator: number of practitioners reporting increased confidence in professional judgements</p> <p>Denominator: number of practitioners reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning, mid-point and end-point survey issued to engaging practitioners.
<p>4. Improve how we teach and learn through working together on research and improvement projects</p>	Percentage of learners demonstrating improved outcomes* as a result of experiencing effective pedagogies and practices.	<p>Numerator: number of learners demonstrating improved outcomes as a result of experiencing effective pedagogies and practices.</p> <p>Denominator: number of learners within the school / setting/ learning space associated engagement group “wellbeing and learning outcomes”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement Attendance Confidence Wellbeing <p>HGIOS QI 1.1 -self-evaluation for self-improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft form-baseline, mid and end point data collection QI 1.1 -Progress reported by teams before and after collaborative activity
	Percentage of practitioners engaging with the wellbeing and learning workstream reporting a strong commitment to lifelong learning through collaborative professional enquiry.	<p>Numerator: number of practitioners reporting a strong commitment to collaborative professional enquiry</p> <p>Denominator: number of practitioners reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning, mid-point and end-point survey issued to engaging practitioners. Data from GTCS, SSSC, CLD Standards for Scotland and Education Scotland PLL Team on subsequent uptake of further learning.

Social Intelligence - How we work and learn together

Priority	Outcome Measure	Operational Definition	Data Collection Method
1. Build a shared understanding of how we can meaningfully collaborate within and across classes, schools, teams	Percentage of system wide practitioners reporting a "good" or "very good" understanding of Collaborative practice* *As outlined in NA Collaboration Framework	Numerator – percentage of practitioners reporting good or very good understanding Denominator – percentage of practitioners surveyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow-up sample qualitative / quantitative self-evaluation survey across all 8 local authorities via Collaboration Leads to assess shared understanding of priority vision.
2. Increase opportunities for collaboration both at local level and across the Northern Alliance	Percentage of schools/ teams evidencing improved outcomes* through engagement in 'Active Collaboration' projects *Attainment and achievement as reported by practitioners	Numerator - percentage of platform members sharing impactful practice Denominator - percentage of platform practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logic Model (linked to Model for Improvement) to record Purpose Statement, Guiding Questions, Theory of Action, Evidence and Impact. Self-evaluation of current practice against NA Regional Collaboration Model.
3. Work together with our local authority and national partners to make a joined-up offer for professional learning	Completion of collaborative online professional learning community platform Percentage of platform members, evidencing and mobilising impactful learning and practice* *Practice resulting in improved wellbeing and learning outcomes for learners	Numerator - percentage of platform members mobilising impactful practice Denominator - percentage of platform practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through use of platform analytics collect data to identify overall site engagement / by authority registration /number of schools engaged in collaboration to further school improvement - monthly

Equality Investments - How we break down the barriers to wellbeing and learning

Priority	Outcome Measure	Operational Definition	Data Collection Method
<p>1. Make sure we are making best use of our data, measures and money to help us improve outcomes for and with every learner</p>	<p>Completion of Improvement Framework</p> <p>Percentage of practitioners reporting improved outcomes* for their learners *Attainment and achievement as reported by practitioners</p>	<p>Numerator – percentage of practitioners reporting improved outcomes Denominator- percentage of practitioners surveyed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Framework process measures to be planned iteratively by the Steering Group • Qualitative data including the use of MS forms, Likert scale exit questionnaires and Thematic Analysis methodology • Quantitative data including for example ACEL, Positive Destinations and Wellbeing Indicators. • Case studies evidencing effective use of Data for Improvement.
<p>2. Get better at working with our learners and families so that together we can break down their barriers to wellbeing and learning</p>	<p>Percentage of participants who report their experience of participation* as good or better. *As defined through Seven Golden Rules for Learner Participation 3-18</p>	<p>Numerator- percentage of participants reporting improved participation Denominator- percentage of participants surveyed</p> <p>Case Studies evidencing effective participation and learner voice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative data gathered through participatory methods- e.g. Youth Advisory Group, Participatory Budgeting and in collaboration with CLD • Quantitative data to include National CLD Measures and aligned to the National Outcomes as detailed in Best Start Bright Futures Strategic Plan 2022-26
<p>3. Work together to shape policy and practice and build a shared understanding of how we get it right for every learner*</p>	<p>Count – case studies</p>	<p>Numbers of case studies evidencing impact* on learners through shaping policy and practice around the needs and rights of the learner *as reported by learners and practitioners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies evidencing effective policy into practice to be created in partnership with practitioners and learners across the Northern Alliance- count annually.

Systemness - Working together to improve our system

Priority	Outcome Measure	Operational Definition	Data Collection Method
1. Build collective responsibility for and engagement in improving our Northern Alliance system – with and for everyone!	Engagement with the Right Drivers for Whole System Success across the RIC – leading to increased levels of agency and engagement in improvement activity. Systems and processes also support improvement.	Numerator – percentage of participants reporting increased agency Denominator – percentage of participants surveyed Count – case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey – likert scale – baseline, mid and end point count- case studies ongoing over time
2. Build a shared understanding of what makes a good leader of improvement – wherever we are in our learning journey	Completion of key principles Number of case studies with practitioners applying agreed principles of leadership and reporting improved outcomes* <i>*HGIOS QI 1.3- Leadership of Change</i>	Count – case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count- case studies ongoing over time
3. Get better at working together as a team to improve where we learn and how we learn	Percentage of practitioners reporting increased collective efficacy, leading to improved outcomes for learners Number of case studies sharing increased collective efficacy* and reporting improved outcomes**. <i>*As outlined within the 'Enabling Conditions for Collective Efficacy', Jenni Donohoo, Peter DeWitt</i> <i>**Attainment and achievement as reported by practitioners</i>	Numerator - percentage of practitioners reporting increased collective efficacy Denominator – percentage of practitioners surveyed Count – case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey – likert scale – baseline, mid and end Count- case studies ongoing over time

As our system matures, we are interested in finding out how targeted improvement activity as set out within driver workstream plans influences the wider system. The priorities within the phase 4 plan have been shaped to reflect what matters to our practitioners and to reflect local and national priorities. As we move forward, it is our theory that we will move towards a more joined up approach in tackling shared priorities. As a result, we have developed universal measures to capture to what extent we are building a sense of collective responsibility for improving outcomes for our learners in the north.



Universal Measures

Area of Focus	Outcome Measure	Operational Definition	Data Collection Method
Sampling Survey			
Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within settings, schools and teams • across schools, settings or teams at a local, regional or national level 	The extent to which practitioners and learners are engaged in collaborative activity at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school, setting or team level • local regional or national level 	The extent to which practitioners and learners are engaged in collaborative activity at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school, setting or team level • local regional or national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling – 10 practitioners per local authority per month
Culture - opportunities to engage in improvement activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within settings, schools and teams • across schools • settings or teams at local, regional or national level 	The extent to which practitioners and learners are engaged in improvement activity at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school, setting or team level • local, regional or national level 	Number of practitioners or learners reporting 'engaged' or 'leading improvement activity' (Likert Scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling – 10 practitioners per local authority per month
Digital Technologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Acceptability • Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which digital technologies are accessible to practitioners and learners 	Number of practitioners and learners reporting 'always' or 'most of the time' (Likert Scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling – 10 practitioners per local authority per month
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which practitioners and learners agree that digital technologies can support them in their role 	Number of practitioners and learners reporting 'agree' or 'strongly agree' (Likert Scale)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which practitioners and learners are supported to develop their skills and capabilities in using digital technologies 	Number of practitioners and learners reporting 'always' or 'most of the time' (Likert Scale)	

Area of Focus	Outcome Measure	Operational Definition	Data Collection Method
Connect	Newspaper subscriptions	Number increasing monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cumulative total via MailChimp
	Number of practitioners attending professional learning sessions	Number of registrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cumulative total via Eventbrite
Collaborate	Microsoft Teams Memberships	Number of active memberships increasing monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cumulative total via Microsoft Teams Census
	Collaborative Engagements	Number of practitioners engaging in collaborative engagement - ranging from 'raising awareness' to 'collaborative enquiry'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and range gathered monthly via central team app
Learn	Registration and engagement with World Education Summit	Number of practitioners who sign up to World Education Summit Number of case studies evidencing impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number gathered quarterly Number gathered quarterly



Cross Cutting Themes

Within the plan there are four cross cutting themes which permeate driver activity:

- Collaboration
- Improvement
- Culture
- Digital

We have learned from activity within our phase 3 plan that these themes will help us to create the conditions for collaborative improvement, as they weave their way through driver activity within the plan and across the wider system.

In order to ensure we are making progress within these cross cutting themes, we are making use of a range of resources, as outlined below:



Collaboration

Over the course of the Phase 3 plan, we have worked together to gain clarity around what it means to meaningfully collaborate. This has resulted in the development of the Northern Alliance Collaboration Framework, which was developed and then tested within our networks. The Framework helps us to understand what effective collaboration looks and feels like, with four core principles and ten indicators, taking us from 'latent collaboration' to 'deep collaboration'. This framework will be used to build a shared language and understanding of meaningful collaboration at class, school, setting, team, local and regional level.

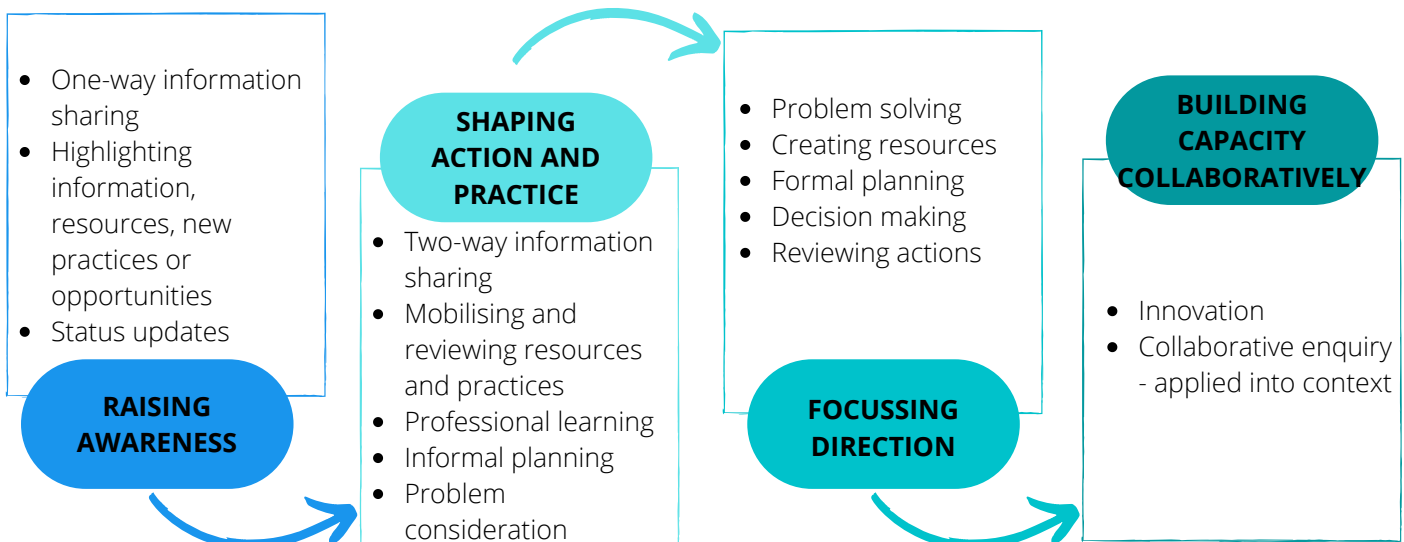
Using the framework, progress towards deep collaboration will be tracked within driver activity as well as understanding to what extent practitioners across the Northern Alliance are engaged in meaningful collaborative activity, which is resulting in improvement.

The Collaboration Framework has also helped us to develop a tool for tracking the different types of collaborative engagements within driver workstream activity. See diagram on below.

"We need to prioritise time together to collaborate across schools." Local Authority Officer



"Using collaboration to tackle strategically the tough challenges that persist across the years and establishing conditions for solutions to be developed." Education Scotland Officer



Based on evidence of progress so far, we predict a deepening of collaborative activity, with a greater emphasis on engagement in collaborative enquiry – focusing on impact on learners.

“Creating/managing time for people to reflect/discuss/share/support and challenge each other with improved outcomes at the heart.”
Head Teacher



In order to understand whether changes made within priorities actually lead to improvement, the Northern Alliance workstream leads use an improvement methodology called the ‘Model for Improvement.’ This is a simple yet powerful tool for accelerating improvement, which has two parts:



- **The Thinking Part** – three key questions to help us plan for improvement
- **The Doing Part** – the PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) cycle which supports us to test and implement changes. The PDSA cycle enables us to determine if the change is an improvement

The Northern Alliance driver teams have all engaged in ‘Model for Improvement’ professional learning and as a result, have developed:

- Measurable aims and a measure plan for each priority.
- Theories and change ideas to test whether they impact on process and outcome measures.
- Processes for tracking data over time to help them understand whether a change is leading to an improvement.

“Everyone understanding improvement methodology and how to measure improvement and ensure change isn’t just for change’s sake.”
Head Teacher

These processes are also shared with practitioners in order to build capacity and confidence in planning for improvement within schools, settings and teams. Within each driver workstream, there is a focus on building improvement capacity and sharing practice through collaborative enquiry, which will ultimately help us to understand whether the changes we have made, lead to improved outcomes for learners.



Culture

"Culture is the way we do things around here"- Deal & Kennedy

"Need to encourage boldness and bravery and share these...risk that we measure everything rather than innovate."

Head Teacher

Whilst making effective use of systems and processes to capture improvement is important, equally so is:

- Creating a learning culture in which people are encouraged to talk with their peers about mistakes and uncertainties in their practice, learn from them and move forward.
- Building relationships and trust between partners in a system.
- Establishing shared purpose.
- Developing shared values, principles and behaviours

If we work together to develop the right culture for collaborative improvement, practitioners, learners and parents and partners will feel more connected to improvement activity and agency will grow within and across schools, settings and teams. This will help us achieve the end goal of building collective responsibility for improving outcomes for all learners. In addition, the voices from the different parts of our system will help to shape and form local, regional and national policy.

Developing a collaborative culture is a key responsibility of our driver workstream teams and they will actively pursue representation from all sectors, (including Gaelic Medium) as well as the voices of our learners. The Northern Alliance Youth Advisory Group will be strong partners in working with our learners.

"Engaging meaningfully with young people to find out what their barriers are and how we can work with and support them to bring about the necessary changes." CLD Lead

We want to know whether we are growing a collaborative culture within our Northern Alliance system, and we will be using a sampling method to capture whether we are making progress over the life of the plan, surveying practitioners and learners from across our system.



The Pandemic has taught us that the use of digital can add significant value to the way we teach, we learn, we communicate and collaborate. This has been particularly evident across our RIC where we unlocked the potential to learn and work together across the mountains and seas between us, across sectors and settings to share what works for us and to learn with and from one another.

“Digital ways of working have already provided many more opportunities for working collaboratively over the last 2 years – important not to lose this as we return to face to face.”
Teacher

Leveraging digital also means that we don’t always need to travel many miles to attend professional learning sessions or collaborate with colleagues. This saves us time and money – and more importantly, supports our wellbeing. New ways of working have revealed the potential of opening up the curriculum to our learners, deepening connections to wellbeing and learning.

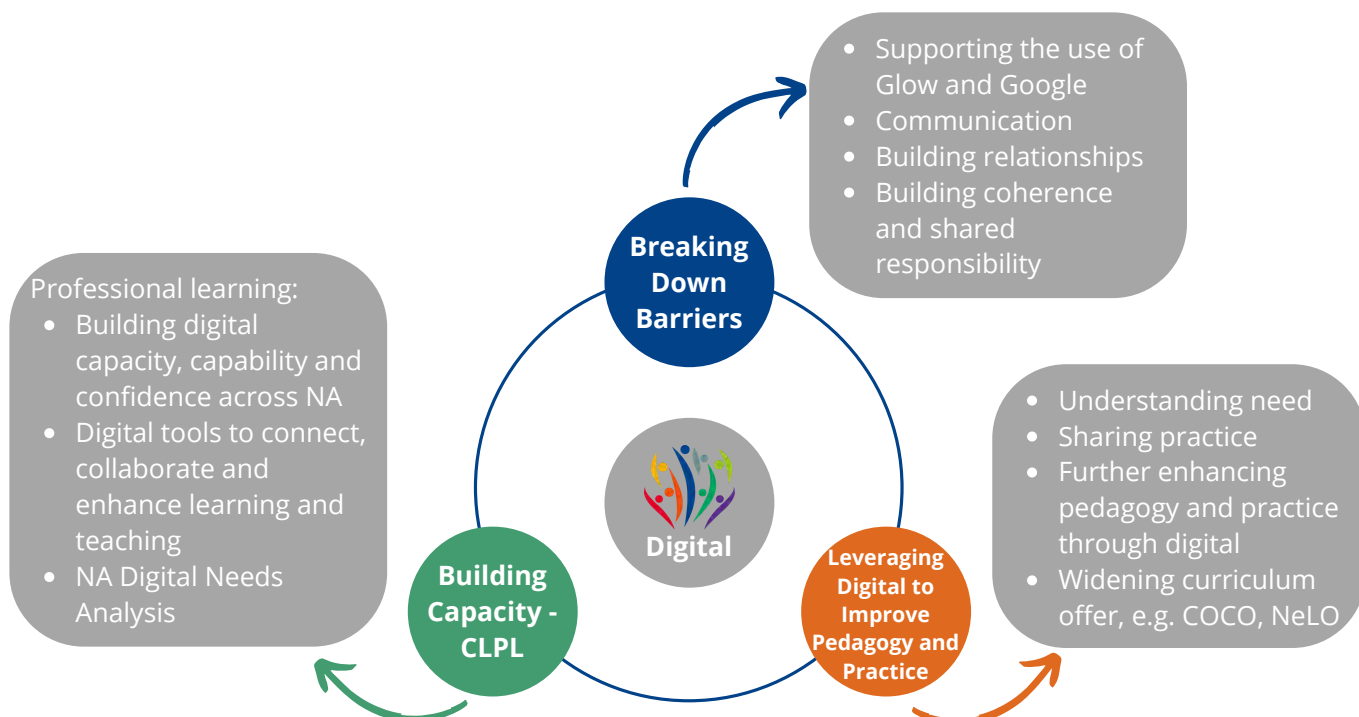
“How do we use digital to expand the curriculum for all young people?”
Education Scotland Officer

Our partnership working with e-Sgoil continues to grow and we continue to explore new and innovative ways of opening up learning opportunities through digital across our region.

We will continue to develop COCO, our collaborative online curriculum offer which is a collaboration of our 8 local authorities to offer learners the opportunity to access Senior Phase courses from other schools and places of learning across our region.

“There are now opportunities for children and young people from across the NA and beyond to share their learning and connect with others, this can be done more easily via digital platforms.”
GME Teacher

However, there is still more work to be done to fully realise the potential of digital moving forward. There are barriers which we still have to overcome and we recognise the need to build confidence and capacity. We have identified 3 areas of focus for our digital team within the phase 4 plan.



We have also included digital as an area of focus within our suite of universal measures – focusing on:

- Accessibility of digital technology
- Acceptability of digital technology
- Availability of support to build confidence and capability

This data will help us to understand to what extent we are leveraging digital across the region, what the barriers are and where we need to target our activity.

Connecting with the Plan

This shared theory of action sets out how we aim to bring about greater freedom across the Northern Alliance to **connect, collaborate, to share and mobilise what works well, to problem solve and generate new ideas**. The ambition is to deepen connections to wellbeing and learning and to work together to break down barriers to wellbeing and learning with and for every learner. Your voices have shaped this plan and will continue to shape it as we work together to bring its content to life. Take a look at some of the themes we will be exploring together in the year ahead - you can find these in Appendix 4. Next step is to reach out to our team - you can find contact details in Appendix 5. Let's get going!

"For everyone in the system to have a sense of collective efficacy, that positive and real chances can occur, and we can be agents of that change." Teacher

Feeling well and learning well

- Curriculum design and pathways
- Learning environments
- Nurture and belonging
- Learning partners
- Learning, teaching and assessment- sharing expectations
- Engaging in collaborative enquiry

Breaking down barriers to wellbeing and learning

- Learner and family participation – working together to break down barriers to wellbeing and learning
- Using data effectively
- Sharing what works around national policy – e.g. UNCRRC, Morgan Review, The Promise



How we work and learn together

- How we create the conditions for meaningful collaboration
- Opportunities to connect and collaborate with colleagues on common themes
- Developing an online professional learning community

Working together to improve our system

- Understanding and using the Right Drivers to drive improvement from within
- Leading improvement at all levels of the system
- Sharing what works for you and learning from others
- Building collective responsibility for improvement within and across teams

APPENDIX 5 - KEY CONTACTS

<p>Regional Improvement Lead</p> <p>Depute Regional Improvement Lead</p>	<p>Laurence Findlay</p> <p>James Wylie</p>
<p>Project Management and Improvement</p>	<p>Kathleen Johnston - Quality Improvement Manager</p> <p>Jenny Foxen - Project Officer</p> <p>Andy Thompson - Data/Research Assistant (interim)</p>
<p>Wellbeing and Learning</p>	<p>Cheryl Sharp-Sturrock - Early Years</p> <p>Heather Grant - Primary</p> <p>Kirsty Campbell - Secondary</p> <p>Jacqui Yule - Digital</p>
<p>Social Intelligence</p>	<p>Anne Craig - Workstream Lead</p>
<p>Equality Investments</p>	<p>Ruth Reid - Workstream Lead (interim)</p> <p>Bernadette Cairns - Equalities</p> <p>Sue Briggs - Community Learning and Development</p>
<p>Systemness</p>	<p>Mike Burchell - Workstream Lead</p>
<p>Digital Depute Head Teachers</p>	<p>David Downham</p> <p>Thomas Webster</p> <p>Sarah Paterson</p> <p>Simon Hall</p>

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