

AGREED DRAFT

EMPOWERING LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES

Introduction

An empowered system expects, and creates, the conditions for all to work within a culture of collaboration and collegiality with learners, parents, colleagues and multi-agency partners. All share a vision for education based on the values and needs of the community.

'Improving the education and life chances of our children and young people is the defining mission of our Scottish education system. Our shared ambition is to close the unacceptable gap in attainment between our least and most disadvantaged children and to raise attainment for all.'

Education reform - Joint Agreement, June 2018

The provision of education in Scotland is the statutory responsibility of local authorities who have the duty to ensure that there is adequate and efficient provision of school education and early learning and childcare in their area. This includes being accountable for the performance and improvement of individual schools and services as well as that of the authority itself.

'Heads of establishment are very well supported by Glasgow City Council's universal approach, known as Glasgow's Improvement Challenge. At the same time, they are empowered to make individual decisions to adapt approaches to meet the needs of their own school contexts. Almost all staff who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires and engaged in inspection focus groups demonstrated a very clear understanding, and a deep knowledge, of the impact of poverty in relation to their context.'

Glasgow City Council inspection, March 2019

Local authorities work in partnership with headteachers and other partners to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and their families. Headteachers, as senior officers of the local authority, are key to the collaborative self-evaluation activities required to support improvement.

'Staff in education establishments are empowered to take account of the local context when deciding how best to meet the needs of children and young people. They have a very sound understanding of the need for evidence to inform improvement and they are very clear how their role in self-evaluation and school improvement drives outcomes for children and young people.'

Renfrewshire Council inspection, February 2019

Local authorities work together with colleagues in their Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs), with the Regional Improvement Teams in Education Scotland and other partners, to strengthen educational improvement support and professional development in order to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people.

By building on local provision and establishing a common purpose and goals, RICs can provide a framework for authorities to share expertise, innovation and best practice.

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RICs should promote and support collaborative working through teacher networks, learning partnerships and wider leadership and professional development adding value to the role of local authorities.

Principles

In an empowered system, local authorities:

- have a mutually respectful and supportive relationship with their headteachers and clear processes in place to minimise/avoid unnecessary bureaucracy;
- are able to intervene should any statutory duty or contractual obligation be in breach;
- are responsible for the local authority education budget and the delegation of funding to schools while headteachers make decisions on the spending within that delegated budget;
- are responsible for promoting the involvement of parents, and supporting schools in this, including through the development of a parental engagement strategy; and
- have an open, transparent and robust framework for accountability where responsibility and ownership of improvement is shared with headteachers as senior officers of the Council.

In an empowered system, Regional Improvement Collaboratives:

- promote and support a culture of collaboration based on trust and open dialogue, and encourage empowered headteachers and staff in the pursuit of partnership working; and
- ensure activity is driven by the improvement needs identified in each region, reflecting national priorities and evidence and promoting innovation, equity and best practice.

Resources

- Inspection of local authorities: <https://education.gov.scot/other-sectors/education-authority>
- Review of Regional Improvement Collaboratives: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/regional-improvement-collaboratives-rics-interim-review/>
- Empowered System Guidance, including local authority self-evaluation framework: <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/an-empowered-system>