

## East Ayrshire Council Collaborative Improvement Summary of Findings Report - March 2023

### Aim of Collaborative Improvement

The aim of Collaborative Improvement is to share what works well at a local authority level and to support sustainable improvement in areas of activity that have been identified as in need of further development, share practice and to encourage collaboration and partnership working to promote increased consistency of outcomes for all learners. In short, it is consistent with the national goal of achieving excellence and equity. Collaborative Improvement can also help to In line with our ongoing commitment to improvement in East Ayrshire, the Authority participated, in partnership with ADES and Education Scotland, in a Collaborative Improvement activity in March 2023. The broad aims of the programme were to support local improvement,

### Focus for East Ayrshire

The strategic overarching theme we are looking to address is the extent to which our approaches to targeted interventions are strengthening an inclusive culture that meet the needs of all our learners and how will we know? How well do they support increased levels of inclusion and participation?

For East Ayrshire, the overarching theme for the Collaborative Improvement visit was Health and Wellbeing (HWB), where we were keen to explore our approaches to specific universal and targeted support for children and young people with a view to further developing our strategic vision for inclusion, in turn supporting increased levels of inclusion, participation and attainment. The visit included focus groups and establishment visits linked to the following key areas:

- Schools' Counselling Service
- Family Engagement Programmes in Early Years
- Therapeutic Model and Neurosequential Model in Education
- 16-24 Emotional Wellbeing
- Care Experience Framework
- Health and Wellbeing Data

### Context

East Ayrshire is currently undergoing a review of inclusive practice and has developed a strategic paper which was presented to elected members in March 2023. With increasing numbers of children and young people in our educational establishments with additional support needs, the paper outlined our intentions to manage this within existing budgets, whilst being cognisant of emerging needs following the pandemic, including impact on pupil attendance and ongoing commitment to reducing exclusions. This is set in the context of significant Council fiscal challenges with annual efficiencies required to be made to education core budgets as well as managing the transition from being a SAC Challenge Authority; with the added requirement to manage a £635,000 per year reduction in funding.

### Key Questions used to support professional dialogue and feedback:

- To what extent are each of these areas meeting the needs of children and young people?
- What is working well and how can we continue to improve these areas of provision?
- How can this support increased levels of inclusion and participation?
- How effective is the collection and analysis of HWB data to identify needs of children and young people and to inform improvement priorities at Service and Establishment levels?

## Key Areas of focus:

### Schools' Counselling Service

In East Ayrshire, the School Counselling Service is centrally organised. This ensures a consistent, successful approach across the local authority and aligns with the wider strategic authority, vision focusing on whole school, family and community early intervention and preventative approaches. The delivery and impact of School Counselling is reviewed on a monthly basis by a multi-agency group, which includes key partners including Educational Psychology, CAMHS, the wider Health and Social Care Partnership and third sector colleagues.

#### Key Strengths

- Robust quantitative and qualitative data gathered over time clearly shows the positive impact the service is having on children and young people accessing the service from 5-18 years of age in a range of ways.
- Partnership working has been crucial for the ongoing development and success of the service and the range of partners we work with has evolved with the service. Examples demonstrated included the Wellbeing Network which provides an opportunity for all counsellors and partners who support the wellbeing of children and young people to work and learn together effectively.
- Partnership working and co-production with children and young people was evidenced on the visit, an area that has continued to develop and inform further improvements of the counselling service and wider approaches to wellbeing across our school settings. This has included work within schools via Wellbeing Champion focus groups, the Children & Young People's Cabinet and Young Carers representatives.
- There is a well-established group of School Counselling Leads from all Primary, Secondary and Specialist schools in East Ayrshire who meet on a quarterly basis to share good practice, discuss challenges and work together to ensure improvements and consistency in approach.

#### Opportunities for Improvement

- Utilise the skills and expertise of the Counsellors/Wellbeing Practitioners to help build capacity amongst our school staff and parents/carers to ensure our service is having a positive impact at a wider universal level for the longer term as well as a more targeted approach with individuals and groups of children and young people.
- Establish a strategic Education Wellbeing Group to ensure all approaches are coordinated and needs-led, and that it connects directly into other multi-agency strategic groups such as GIRFEC Group and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
- Ensure that data shared from the school counselling service is used effectively in collaboration with our partners to continue to shape preventative and early intervention approaches for all, adapt PSE & HWB programmes as required, target CLPL appropriately for practitioners, and work with individual schools and teams to meet identified needs in flexible and sustainable ways.

## Family Engagement Programmes in Early Years

The PEEP Learning Together Programme is an evidence based programme produced by the registered charity People. This family engagement programme is a nationally recognised programme with funding being made available by the Scottish Government to train practitioners across East Ayrshire Council. The majority of staff trained to deliver PEEP are the Equity and Excellence Leads (E&EL) and the Early Learning and Childcare Community Practitioner – currently 30. The delivery of this programme is enhanced by the E&ELs and Community Practitioners working together in an integrated way to effectively deliver the programme.

### Key Strengths

- The delivery of this programme is enhanced by the Equity and Excellence Leads and Community Practitioners working together in an integrated way to effectively deliver the programme.
- In the most successful programme, a key contributing factor of the success within this ECC is the leadership from the Head of Centre (HOC), whereby the HOC has a clear objective to increase parental engagement within the settings and this is evident within the setting's improvement plan.
- The Community Practitioners and Equity and Excellence Leads have forged a strong working relationship, and are passionate about improving the outcomes for children and their families.
- There is strong evidence of partnership working with colleagues within health such as the Occupational Therapy Team, Speech and Language Therapist as well as the Early Years Dietetic Team.
- Within several settings, PEEP has been used to enhance transitions from home to the setting. Staff have used these sessions to build a knowledge and understanding of children's individual needs prior to them starting within the ECC, and this information has been used to support effective transition i.e. assigning specific keyworkers to children and children within groups.
- Parents feel that they have benefited from attendance at the group, which is evidenced via the evaluation process in their comments.

### Opportunities for Improvement

- Within East Ayrshire there are 36 local authority settings and 7 Funded Providers. To date, only 14 settings have been actively involved in implementing PEEP as part of their family engagement programme. More settings could and should be supported to participate.
- PEEP is only one method of engaging with families, therefore there is a need for a benchmarking exercise across all settings to establish the approaches they are taking engage with families. This exercise should identify where family engagement is working well and where the potential gaps are across the sector.
- The purpose of the benchmarking exercise would be to provide the data/evidence required to both plan for and support the development of more specific targeted measurable aim for the delivery of PEEP within East Ayrshire.
- For settings which are using PEEP effectively as a means of supporting transition from home to the ECC, consideration should be given as to how these sessions can be used to enhance transition between the ECC and primary school in order to ensure effective continuity of learning across the child's educational experience.
- Further consideration needs to now be given to the challenge question set out in 2.5 of How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare which asks :

*“How do we know if the outcomes for children are improving as a result of their participation in family learning?”*

## Therapeutic Model and Neurosequential Model in Education

Practitioners involved in the self-evaluation activity spoke of the models used within schools, in relation to Relational Practice – the use of the Neurosequential Model of Education (NME) and Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) to deepen Nurturing Practice in Schools.

### Key Strengths

- Teachers were able to give examples of how the approach has changed classroom practice.
- School leaders spoke of how the approaches impact on how they deliver the educational offer, how they approach situations and how the approaches have helped deepen relational practice with regards to managing behaviour and support broader inclusive practice at a universal level.
- 40% of our schools and ECCs are actively involved in implementation of these techniques
- 70% of our care experienced children are accessing education in schools where roll out has begun.
- The approaches are tailored to the needs of each school at a school level and agreed through school improvement planning.

### Opportunities for Improvement

- We are in year 3 of implementation for both approaches at a systems level and this has happened during a global pandemic where implementation issues arose. As such, impact and consistency should be measured over time over another 3 year cycle.
- Launch & embed redrafted relationships framework policy that incorporates the above approaches and links to new CLPL framework for inclusion
- Support schools who are not yet in a state of readiness to engage in the above to get to this point
- Further develop our policy and practice in assessing and supporting effective practice when children and young people may exhibit high levels of dysregulation in a school or ECC setting, by explicitly incorporating the above approaches.
- Continue to support schools through our early adopters groups to embed these approaches to further improve the educational experiences of children at a universal level.
- Consider guidance of how the above approaches would suggest education has to be delivered at both universal and targeted levels. Consider systemic barriers to wellbeing, such as transitions between sectors and look at congruence with other policy drivers.
- Ensure all of the above is overseen by a strategic group for Rights, Relationships & Wellbeing.

## 16-24 Emotional Wellbeing

The session for the 16-24 Emotional Well-Being Group included representation from Education, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Ayrshire College, Social Work Services, and DWP as well as young people attending at the SL33 skills and learning hub. The ethos and environment at SL33 was seen to be key in facilitating the aim of engaging with young people (16-24) who require support and guidance to progress into sustainable positive destinations.

### Key Strengths

- Evidence of strong partnership working was embedded in service delivery and young people asked to feedback were very positive about the impact that targeted support from key professionals in SL33 had made on them.
- The multi-faceted nature of delivery across a variety of services and partner providers to support children and young people was seen to be an excellent example of GIRFEC in action.
- The 16-24 Emotional Well-Being group evidenced palpable partnership working across a range of services with support to the cohort through a bespoke resource directory; for young and single parents through targeted Parental Employability Support Fund delivery; through mental health and being champions and student ambassadors at college; online mental health and well-being support and advice via the KOOTH web platform; and one to one emotional well-being through a range of supports at SL33.
- The authority's HEART (Help Everyone at the Right Time) model was seen by partners as both positive and underpinning delivery of services.

### Opportunities for Improvement

- While it was apparent that a positive culture drives delivery in SL33, service delivery looks to re-engage young people in learning, retain connections with school in the expectation that at some point they will be reintegrated back into mainstream education.
- The importance of effective gate keeping was noted at the visit to mitigate against SL33 becoming overwhelmed.
- By developing and strengthening the universal offer in school for young people at risk of disengagement, the focus of SL33 could be targeted at those young people who are hardest to reach and could include non-attenders struggling with connection to formal learning.

## Care Experienced Assessment Framework

As part of the approach to supporting the targeted needs of the Care Experienced population of children and young people within East Ayrshire, a presentation by the Depute Principal Educational Psychologist and Interim Strategic Education Manager (Inclusion) focused on the development of a new Care Experienced Assessment framework.

The purpose of the framework is twofold: to ensure statutory obligations are met to assess whether a Care Experienced Child has Additional Support Needs; and, to ensure that where the assessment identifies risk factors, an appropriate educational support plan is implemented as part of the statutory Child's Plan. In addition, at a local level, data evidenced the need for improved understanding and practice to support this population of children and young people and ensure provision of an appropriate, targeted assessment to improve practice and implementation of supports.

### Key Strengths

- Clear evidence of a research base being the foundation for the framework.
- Ambition to make the framework user friendly and accessible.
- Practitioners involved in the current test of change see it as an assessment, planning and review tool that could potentially reduce workload over time
- Possible future application for any child who may require further assessment in relation to potential additional Support.

### Opportunities for Improvement

- A need to make the framework more user friendly as, in its present form, it may be overly bureaucratic.
- Possibility of increased workload issues for teachers who have small numbers of care experienced children and young people in a class.
- A need to ensure all colleagues have a clear understanding of how to interpret the assessment and how this translates and is implemented in practice.

## Health & Wellbeing Data

The session on HWB Data focussed on the collection of HWB data where we shared our current approaches as well as details of work that is underway in a number of establishments to pilot the use of the Glasgow Motivation and Wellbeing Profile (GMWP). The Audit Scotland report on improving outcomes in education, which was published in 2021, identified need for better data to understand if outcomes such as wellbeing are improving. Following engagement with a range of stakeholders, including Elected Members, East Ayrshire Council opted not to introduce the national HWB Census.

The key question we explored in this session was:

- How effective is the collection and analysis of HWB data to identify needs of children and young people and to inform improvement priorities at Service and Establishment levels?

### Key Strengths

- Schools in East Ayrshire are able to use wellbeing assessment tools which best suit their pupils.
- A range of tools are being used across schools eg. (GMWP, Wellbeing Web, GL assessments)
- A number of schools are participating in the authority Glasgow Motivation and Wellbeing Profile (GMWP) pilot.
- We use a bespoke EAC HWB authority tracker, where primary staff provide attainment levels for HWB three times per year based on ongoing assessment supported by use of the tools noted above.

### Opportunities for Improvement

- Ensure sufficient training is delivered across EAC ensure all staff are actively engaging in the process and that they understand their role in carrying out pastoral remits as outlined in the Professional Standards.
- Consider one strategy to bring together HWB programmes in EAC to overcome fragmentation and have clearly outlined universal and targeted supports.
- Reflect further on ensuring equity in our pastoral/ pupil support provision in our secondary schools and consider how, and by whom, PSE is best delivered.
- Consider further opportunities to offer counselling support to staff in secondary schools and encourage parents to utilise the mental wellbeing supports available.

## Recommendations from Collaborative Team

In addition to the strengths and opportunities highlighted above, the visiting officers strengthened the next steps captured in the Inclusion paper “Maintaining Focus but Overcoming Fragmentation” with the following recommendations:

- Ensure that, at a universal level, the curriculum, learning, and teaching meet the needs of all learners, thereby minimising the range of targeted interventions required and consolidating a staged intervention approach to support. (Triangle)
- Appropriate curricular progression pathways, supported by an inclusive learning environment, support the development of the skills and attributes of the four capacities
- Make explicit that the overarching ‘East Ayrshire way’ is founded on relational approaches regardless of the individual tool selected by establishments and that the thread of GIRFEC permeates these approaches.
- Ensure a shared practitioner understanding that health and wellbeing underpins and is a necessary foundation for ‘readiness to learn/ engage’ and leads to subsequent improved outcomes in attainment.
- Wider consultation on the collection of data within HWB to ensure a shared understanding on the processes, purpose, and rationale. What is the data being collected, who is it for and why is it needed?
- Learning visits with a focus on relational approaches
- Consideration of how the impact of the current approaches can be more consistently gathered and shared.
- Consideration of how the assessment framework for CECYP could be adapted to ensure it is manageable for staff and clearly linked to both the universal offer for inclusion and more targeted support plans.
- Consider restructuring the new improvement plan (2024-2027) based on the development of relational practice, with the range of interventions available featuring as part of the implementation. This could be done in such a way as to continue to provide flexibility of approach for schools but with the ultimate aim of improving relational practice covering all.