



COLLABORATIVE IMPROVEMENT

Midlothian Council November 2022

Abstract

A focused report on the collaborative work undertaken in Scotland's fastest growing local authority to establish an evidence based shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities around securing improved outcomes for our school leavers.



Collaborative Improvement

Collaborative Improvement is an approach to bringing about improvement through shared work involving staff from the local authority, Education Scotland and ADES. This approach was secured through the Education Reform Joint Agreement published in June 2018 and all local authorities are committed to the process. Midlothian is the fourteenth local authority to participate.

In each Collaborative Improvement a range of evidence underpins a self-evaluative statement highlighting what works well, and areas requiring improvement, within an agreed area of focus.

Thereafter, fieldwork is undertaken in the local authority. This enables colleagues from ADES, Education Scotland and those from within the host local authority, and those who work in partnership with the local authority, to come together to take a closer look at identified areas of priority and to look for ways to help address identified challenges.

Midlothian Collaborative Improvement

The agreed context for the November 2022 Collaborative Improvement Fieldwork was our school leavers’ destination data. A prioritised SWOT analysis was collaboratively constructed and, with associated data, served as our self-evaluation statement. This was underpinned by an evidence pack shared with core participants. This showed that on average, over a four year timeframe, 10% fewer Midlothian school leavers chosen destination was Higher Education when compared to the National Average. This resulted in our chosen overarching focus question

- How can we improve the proportion of Midlothian school leavers in Further and/or Higher Education?

To support our stated intention of improving outcomes for school leavers our overarching focus question was subdivided into four areas of desired impact. This approach allowed us to secure a coherent structure to our professional dialogue sessions which were the key aspect of our fieldwork programme.

Desired Impact Area 1	Desired Impact Area 2	Desired Impact Area 3	Desired Impact Area 4
Establish a shared clarity regarding the issues stopping young people entering FE/HE	Improve our use of data to inform and support improved FE/HE destinations outcomes	Develop collaboration between our schools to ensure all Midlothian young people experience a progressive curriculum that supports improved destinations outcomes	Improve alignment of available resources, from an excellence and equity perspective, to support improved destinations outcomes

Professional dialogue in each impact area was structured around

- barriers faced and changes that could be made to secure improvement



Midlothian Context

Our Children Young People and Partnerships Vision is,

‘All children, young people, adults and communities in Midlothian are supported to be the best they can be. This will be achieved through a nurturing, respectful and collaborative approach that promotes wellbeing, equity, inclusion and lifelong learning.’

Our vision is implemented through our Education Service Plan. This plan sets our strategic priorities and the associated actions in the plan articulate well with national priorities. Our empowered system allows local decision making and actions in our schools and Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) centres to reflect local issues and seek improved outcomes for all of our Children and Young People (CYP).

In our schools and ELC centres we have

- 2,062 children accessing funded ELC
- 8,098 pupils in 31 Primary Schools; 27.5% ASN and 3.46% of ASN are care experienced
- 5,638 students in 6 Secondary Schools; 40.7% ASN and 4.84% of ASN are care experienced
- 94 pupils at our standalone specialist provision, Saltersgate School; 11 co-located specialist provisions with approximately 158 children/young people (CYP) attending
- 9.22% of our CYP live in SIMD Quintile 1 compared with 14.30% living in Quintile 5
- a pupil-teacher ratio of 16.1 in primary and 12.0 in secondary
- 857 school leavers per session (*averaged over last 4 years*)
- a Learning Estate Strategy that reflects 2018-2028 population projections making Midlothian the fastest growing local authority in Scotland and aims to build 5 new primary and 2 new secondary schools over the medium term

Challenges identified in our self-evaluation and fieldwork scene setting presentation include

- over the recent timeframe and compared to our national and virtual comparators too few of our school leavers move into Higher Education
- our system lacks data around the quality of the employment that a disproportionate number of our school leavers move into
- we have too many S4 leavers in most of our schools, and a particularly high number in a few of our schools; how can we ensure that all our students benefit from engaging, relevant and stimulating pathways?
- over the recent timeframe and compared to our national and virtual comparators too few of our students stay on until end of the Senior Phase
- an uneven secondary school roll profile across the local authority and in that context ensuring there is a consistent and fair curriculum offer for all Midlothian CYP
- SCQF and SQA attainment concerns across our Senior Phase with a particular concern around Level 5 attainment, and associated trends, within S4



- building on our £10million+ 'Equipped for Learning' investment to improve our curriculum through maximising the opportunities associated with 1 to 1 devices for all our CYP
- planning proactively between our schools and with our partners to ensure a relevant curriculum with appropriate pathways for all our students

We recognised that this Collaborative Improvement was an opportunity to re-evaluate our strengths in curriculum and to identify next steps supporting our overarching ambition of collaboration, innovation, partnerships and pathways.

Strengths Identified During Our Fieldwork

Together, our ADES and Education Scotland partners, working with Midlothian personnel and partners, recognised many strengths during our Collaborative Improvement. These were reflected in our self-evaluation and prioritised through our SWOT analysis.

Through the fieldwork sessions the following strengths were confirmed:

- our use and analysis of data to identify cohorts of CYP who are potentially underachieving; Midlothian knows its challenges and is clear on its areas for improvement
- our aspirational, co-constructed vision with a commitment from all schools, and significant partners represented, to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for CYP
- a clear strategy for implementing improvement through our empowered system
- recent appointments to our Central Team have built capacity to provide an appropriate level of support and challenge

Areas for Development Identified During Our Fieldwork

Our ADES and Education Scotland partners, working with Midlothian personnel and partners, prioritised the following areas for development. These were reflected in our self-evaluation, evidence and prioritised through our SWOT Analysis.

The following areas for development were confirmed through fieldwork sessions,

- build leadership capacity to support the systemisation of 3-18 collaborative work at all levels, and with partners, increasing the effective use of our resources, strengthening an equity of opportunity across Midlothian schools and improving the attainment of CYP
- maximise the effective use of our 'Equipped for Learning' programme to support a wider and more flexible approach to our Senior Phase curricular offering and CYP's learning through increased collaboration between schools, and by schools and partners, to develop in-person and on-line programmes, enhancing learner pathways and improving attainment for CYP
- support 3-18 curricular progression that: reflects our purpose; places CYP at the centre of our work; confirms the importance of the Broad General Education (BGE), ensures effective work



with partners; and includes a skills progression framework that is embedded in our approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, and supports our raising attainment strategy

- develop a consistent approach to the planning of learning, teaching and assessment for all CYP, 3-18, monitored and tracked robustly through our Quality Improvement practices to help support our work in meeting the needs of all CYP in an inclusive learning environment and improve attainment at key milestones

How we will build upon our Collaborative Improvement

Our Midlothian Core Team will build upon these identified areas and fully consider the range of barriers and changes highlighted through our Clarify Canvas** structured discussions. This will ensure a clear link from our Collaborative Improvement work to our existing Service Improvement Planning and Implementation cycles.

Progress in addressing our areas for development through our collaborative and innovative approaches, as well as our work with partners, will be reported through our established Standards and Quality processes and practices.

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