Shetland Islands Council

Meeting(s):	**Education and Families Committee**	**06 September 2022**
Report Title:	**The Three Island Authorities, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and Education Scotland, Collaborative Improvement Review, May 2022**	
Reference Number:	**CS-14-22-D**	
Author / Job Title:	**Robin Calder, Executive Manager, Quality Improvement**	

1.0   Decisions / Action required:

1.1   The Education and Families Committee is asked to **NOTE** this report and appendices, summarising the three island authorities: Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council, ADES and Education Scotland's Collaborative Improvement Review in May 2022.

2.0   High Level Summary:

2.1   Collaborative improvement is an approach to improvement through shared work, involving education staff, learners, parents and carers and relevant partners within local authorities, working alongside colleagues from Education Scotland and ADES. Up until May 2022, around eight local authorities in Scotland have hosted a Collaborative Improvement Review with Education Scotland and ADES.

2.2.1   This approach to collaborative improvement was initially outlined in the "Education Reform - Joint Agreement" between the Scottish Government and Local Government, published in June 2018, and was based on the recommendation for a "strengthened middle" in the 2015 OECD Report on Scottish Education, "Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective." The approach is also intended to address the recommendation in Audit Scotland's 2021 Report, "Improving outcomes for young people through school education" that Councils should work with schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, other policy teams and partners to reduce variability in outcomes for children and young people.

2.2.2   Moreover, in March 2022, Professor Ken Muir's Report, "Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education", refers to key principles for moving forward in Scottish education, including:

- *"Opportunities for increased collaboration and meaningful engagement between stakeholders, local authorities, professional associations, trade unions and the national agencies with responsibility for key aspects of education."*

2.3	It was decided in early 2022, through discussions with the Directors and representatives from ADES and Education Scotland, that Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council would host an online Collaborative Improvement Review together in May 2022
2.4	The focus for the three island local authorities Collaborative Improvement Review was around the quality of the curriculum and learner pathways in secondary education, reflecting the importance of continuing to improve outcomes, including attainment for children and young people during their secondary education phase, at a time of national education reform and the recovery stage from the COVID-19 pandemic.
2.5	The three island approach to the ADES and Education Scotland collaboration was also an acknowledgement of the similar challenges and commonality, and part of wider strategic efforts to strengthen partnership working at all levels in the education system across Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council.
2.5.1	However, from the outset of the review, the uniqueness of each island authority was recognised. Whilst there was, as per section four of this report, common ground and cross cutting recommendations from the collaboration experience, there are also specific actions for each local authority.
2.6	Section four of the report provides further detail in respect of: • The focus for the Collaborative Improvement Review. • The engagement with stakeholders from the three island local authorities. • The conclusions and next-steps from the Collaborative Improvement Review.

3.0	**Corporate Priorities and Joint Working:**

3.1	Shetland Islands Council – Our Ambition, 2021-2026 Working together for a positive and sustainable future, Skills and Learning: • We will sustain the quality of learning and teaching in our schools to ensure all learners experience motivating and engaging learning opportunities that maximise attainment and achievement of positive destinations with a particular focus on closing the attainment gap. • We will work to achieve an empowered school system, with participation at all levels including parents, pupils and teachers.

4.0	**Key Issues:**

4.1	Three themes were explored during the two week, online, Collaborative Improvement Review in May 2022, within the overarching focus of the secondary curriculum: **Theme One:** The curriculum and learner pathways in the Senior Phase (Secondary Four to Secondary Six), including exploration of:

- The quality, breadth, diversity and consistency of the curriculum offer in the Senior Phase.
- Curriculum design and learner pathways in the Senior Phase, including the number of learning options studied in S4 to S6, and the timetabling of the Senior Phase.
- The quality of the curriculum offer for learners attaining below National 5 and lateral progression opportunities at National 5 level.
- The curriculum offer for learners with additional support needs in the Senior Phase.
- Conversion rates from National 5 to Higher.
- The resourcing of the Senior Phase.
- Making effective use of data and the impact on positive destinations and outcomes for young people.

Theme Two: Vocational provision within the secondary curriculum and the contribution of partners:

- Vocational provision, including vocational qualifications, foundation apprenticeships and links and provision with local colleges and training providers to support curriculum delivery and learner pathways in the Senior Phase.
- The role of external partners to support curriculum delivery in the Senior Phase, including Skills Development Scotland the Developing the Young Workforce.
- Work experience, voluntary and wider achievement opportunities in the Senior Phase.

Theme Three: The Broad General Education (Secondary One to Secondary Three) and the support given for transition to the Senior Phase**:**

- Pathways and personalisation and choice in the Broad General Education from Secondary One to Secondary Three.
- Transition arrangements from the Broad General Education into the Senior Phase.
- Pastoral support and guidance for young people at the end of S3 to support entering, and progression through, Senior Phase learning pathways, and positive destinations beyond school.
- The quality of information shared by teachers around the opportunities for learners in their subjects beyond school.

4.2 A Project Team, consisting of colleagues from the three island authorities, ADES and Education Scotland, planned the programme, included as Appendix 1 to the report.

4.2.1 Following the initial introductions from each of the three island local authorities, relating to the secondary curriculum and learner pathways focus, the Project Team explored the three themes, outlined in 4.1, in a focus group format with school managers, teachers and relevant partners from across Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council.

4.2.2 Attendees at each of the focus group sessions were asked to consider:

- What is working/going well in schools/the local authority and what are the strengths in respect of the theme being discussed?
- Where are the challenges and concerns in respect of the theme being discussed?
- What should be the focus moving forward in respect of the theme being discussed?
- How can the local authority/ADES/Education Scotland support in respect of the theme being discussed?

4.2.3   There was also additional timeslots for inputs from learners, parents and carers, school managers and professional associations from the island authorities.

4.3   Feedback from the review was shared verbally by ADES and Education Scotland with the Project Team on Thursday 26 May 2022 with a subsequent written summary report.

4.3.1   Aspects of positive practice identified through the Collaborative Improvement Review included in the summary report, for the three island authorities, were as follows:

- The knowledge of, and relationships with, learners and the commitment of education staff to meet the needs of all learners.
- High, positive and sustained destinations for young people leaving school.
- The curriculum rationales in schools are very much linked to local economies and local employment needs.
- The development of Foundation Apprenticeships for learners.
- Online collaboration and engagement is widening course choice for learners and addressing some of the recruitment and retention challenges schools are experiencing.
- Strong relationships with local partners, including Skills Development Scotland, Developing Young Workforce and local colleges.
- Relationships with the community, partners and local businesses.
- The breadth of wider opportunities within schools and employment options for young people.
- Many pastoral transitions within the secondary stage are very strong and learners feel supported through these transitions.
- Partnership working examples to support for learners were evident during the review, including children with additional support needs.
- Good practices learned in terms of ensuring continuing of learning through COVID-19, including the positive impact of online professional learning and collaboration opportunities for staff.

4.3.2   Challenges and areas to explore further, for the three island authorities, were as follows:

- The recruitment and retention of staff.
- The inequity of learning options/curriculum offers within local authorities.
- The curriculum offer for learners with Additional Support Needs.
- The access to and harmonisation of timetables between schools and local colleges.

- Communication with parents and carers around the curriculum options for their children.
- Teacher knowledge of both learner pathways and the totality of the curriculum offer for young people.
- Developing greater consistency of language to support a parity of esteem in respect of more traditional academic routes and emerging vocational opportunities, including when communicating with parents and carers.
- Short term funding decisions around the curriculum causing difficulties in respect of strategic planning.
- Travel and accommodation barriers for some learners accessing the curriculum, particularly from more remote localities.
- The quality of the online experience for learners is variable and leads to digital inequity.
- The transition from the Broad General Education BGE) into the Senior Phase, and the experience of learners in secondary three.
- Ensuring the principles and entitlements to a broad curriculum are adhered to in secondary three, and appropriate assessment and moderation of the final year of the BGE.
- There is an increased demand on Pupil Support staff, partly due to the pandemic, and this needs to be considered carefully.
- There is evidence of a skills gap, post COVID-19, due to the restrictions and mitigations that young people and schools have faced over the last two years.

4.4.   Areas for the three island authorities to focus on, following the review, are as follows:

4.4.1   Young People
- Building resilience in young people to support them into destinations beyond school.
- Harnessing the learner and teacher voice and involving young people in curriculum planning.
- Networking opportunities for young people within and across the island authorities.

4.4.2   Staff
- Broadening this kind of professional discussion through the Collaborative Improvement Review to all practitioners.
- Increased networking for schools with similar sized school rolls.
- Introduction of subject, and other, network groups across the three islands.

4.4.3   Curriculum
- Clarify the totality of the Senior Phase curriculum offer.
- Reviewing and developing Foundation Apprenticeships.
- A further review of how interdisciplinary learning (IDL) can be used to enrich learners' experiences.
- Bringing all relevant parties together to develop a consensus around online / digital learning.
- Promote and support parity between traditional subjects and courses that are more vocational.

| 4.5 | Appendix 2 provides additional clarification on actions and priorities for Shetland Islands Council, emanating from the Collaborative Improvement Review. |

| 4.6 | Furthermore, In Shetland Islands Council, key actions and next steps from the Collaborative Improvement Review will be taken forward in the Excellence and Equity Strategic Plan for Shetland's Learners, which sits within the National Improvement Framework structure, and the work-stream on the development of the curriculum and learner pathways in the Senior Phase. |

| 4.6.1 | Consequently, progress on actions and next steps will be reported through the National Improvement Framework. |

| 4.6.2 | The National Improvement Framework will be presented to the Education and Families Committee on the 08 November 2022. |

| **5.0** | **Exempt and/or confidential information:** |

| 5.1 | None. |

| **6.0** | **Implications:** |

6.1 **Service Users, Patients and Communities:**	All members of the Project Team have been made aware of the content of this report and key messages have also been shared with school managers and all other colleagues and partners who contributed to the Collaborative Improvement Review. There were good levels of engagement in the review, as a whole, from secondary school managers, secondary school staff, young people, parents and carers, colleagues from the professional associations and partners in Shetland.
6.2 **Human Resources and Organisational Development:**	None directly at this point.
6.3 **Equality, Diversity and Human Rights:**	None.
6.4 **Legal:**	The Council has a statutory duty to secure improvement in the quality of education it provides.
6.5 **Finance:**	None.
6.6 **Assets and Property:**	None.
6.7 **ICT and new technologies:**	None.
6.8	None.

Environmental:		
6.9 **Risk Management:**	As above, the Council has a statutory duty to secure improvement in the quality of education it provides.	
6.10 **Policy and Delegated Authority:**	In accordance with Section 2.3.1 of the Council's Scheme of Administration and Delegations, the Education and Families Committee has responsibility and delegated authority for decision making on matters within its remit which includes school education. This report is related to the function of an education authority. This report is for noting only.	
6.11 **Previously considered by:**	None.	N/A

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: The Three Island Authorities, ADES and Education Scotland, Collaborative Improvement Review, Programme, May 2022

Appendix 2: The Three Island Authorities, ADES and Education Scotland, Collaborative Improvement Review, key actions and priorities for Shetland Islands Council.

Background Documents:

https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/agreement/2018/06/education-bill-policy-ambition-joint-agreement/documents/00537386-pdf/00537386-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00537386.pdf

https://www.oecd.org/education/school/Improving-Schools-in-Scotland-An-OECD-Perspective.pdf

https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2021/nr_210323_education_outcomes.pdf

Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

Appendix 2:

The Three Island Authorities, ADES and Education Scotland, Collaborative Improvement Review, key actions and priorities for Shetland Islands Council.

As well as the generic areas for consideration outlined for all three island authorities in section 4.3.2 and 4.4 of the covering report, specific actions for Shetland Islands Council are as follows.

Theme One: Curriculum and Learner Pathways

- In partnership with the school management teams of all the secondary settings, continue to review the curriculum offer, the design of the curriculum, and learner pathways for secondary aged learners as they progress from the Broad General Education into the Senior Phase, referring to the findings from the Collaborative Improvement Review, and taking account of the current review of qualifications and assessment in the Senior Phase, led by Professor Louise Hayward.

- This action will involve further engagement with UHI Shetland, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Ambassadors, and forms part of the remit of Children's Services Employability Skills and Positive Destinations Improvement Group.

- Further, as part of this action, there will also be exploration of current courses delivered to school pupils by UHI Shetland and presentation dates, awards and timelines.

- It will be crucial to ensure structures and mechanisms are in place to enable young people and staff to directly shape the development of the Curriculum and Leaner Pathways in the Senior Phase, moving forward.

- In collaboration with school managers and the local professional associations, undertake a short review of the local authority's approaches to remote learning with particular consideration of the current position of, optional, online live teaching and engagement. A stakeholder group of parents and carers will also be part of this review.

- Continue to address digital connectivity and access to technology issues for children and young people and their families through the development of Children's Services Digital, Learning and Teaching Strategy as well as with reference to Scottish Government commitments and priorities.

- Liaise and engage further with e-Sgoil and the national e-Learning Offer around additional support for secondary five and secondary six learners in Shetland.

- Broaden the Anderson High School, Kirkwall Grammar School and Nicolson Institute collaboration model, including opportunities for Subject Development Groups to engage with subject specialists in the other island authorities.

Theme Two: Vocational provision within the curriculum and the contribution of partners

- Capitalise on the new Shetland UHI and the opportunities to expand provision in schools, building on the progress of Skills for Work programmes, Foundation

Apprenticeships, Modern Apprenticeships and other current Senior Phase opportunities.

- As part of this commitment, develop a stronger understanding within schools of what is being delivered at college to ensure courses are promoted and valued.

- Continue to capture the views of young people and ensure they are taken forward through the OPEN Peer Education Project, which involve issues based workshops for young people, peer mentoring and workshops designed by young people.

- Continue to develop the MCR Pathways programme to support work place mentors/work experience tasters for care experienced and vulnerable young people.

- Emphasise the value and importance of volunteering opportunities for young people in the Senior Phase and ensure volunteering is more strategically placed within the curriculum.

- Continue to develop the role of Youth Development Workers in secondary settings with their work included in school improvement plans.

- Shetland's Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) uptake, in terms of numbers, is currently low. There is a need to review communication with parents/carers and young people regarding the merit and benefits of FA courses.

- More generally, consider communication with parents/carers on the value of alternative pathways for children and young people in both the Broad General Education and Senior Phase.

Theme Three: The Broad General Education and the support given for transition to the Senior Phase

- Continue to build upon the strong transition links from primary seven to secondary one and secondary four into secondary five, which have evolved despite the pandemic.

- Continue to embed and monitor Shetland's current curriculum structure, implemented in 2018 in the Broad General Education (BGE) and Senior Phase.

- Continue to timetable as flexibly as possible in all secondary settings to meet learners' needs and interests.

- Develop approaches to communicating with parents and carers, utilising online platforms such as the online information evenings that have taken place during the pandemic.

- During the pandemic, there has been increased collaboration between all secondary settings and this should continue in the recovery phase.

- Develop the scope of Subject Development Groups around curricular development, moderation and assessment within the BGE.