

## **South Lanarkshire Council – Collaborative Improvement**

10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022

In October 2022, South Lanarkshire Council's Education Resources team, in partnership with ADES and Education Scotland (ES), undertook a Collaborative Improvement exercise to understand the Resource's capacity to lead curricular change. Although the specific focus being considered related to outcomes for young people through the Senior Phase, the relationships, culture and mechanisms of engagement that the Resource has developed with the secondary schools in South Lanarkshire Council, along with the capacity and knowledge contained within the system to confidently lead change, emerged as a particular feature of the activity.

In considering the theme for Collaborative Improvement, the Resource wanted to better understand readiness and capacity to respond to the challenges arising from the current programme of education reform, and specifically to consider outcomes for learners in the Senior Phase.

Planning for the Collaborative Improvement activity started in January 2022. Regular meetings with internal teams and with ADES/ES allowed senior officers to scope the parameters of the exercise to ensure learning was appropriate, purposeful related to existing priorities. The ADES/ES model notes that ownership of the Collaborative Improvement activity sits within the context of the local authority self-evaluation for self-improvement processes. As such South Lanarkshire Council Education Resources led the design, planning and organisation of the activity.

Through discussion and in consultation with ADES/ES colleagues a key 'question' was developed to frame the Collaborative Improvement:

**'How can we improve our central mechanisms of engagement with schools to improve outcomes and destinations for Senior Phase Learners?'**

The question was explored through 3 themes:

**Theme 1: How can we improve our engagement with Head Teachers to influence change?**

**Theme 2: How can we improve our engagement with wider Leadership groups?**

**Theme 3: How can we improve our SLC Senior Phase offer?**

The purpose of the Collaborative Improvement activity is to identify potential opportunities for improvement using a multi-lens/external review process drawing on the experience of the CI team members, and those involved in the CI activities themselves.

Each of the themes was explored separately through scene setting, document analysis, focus groups (see appendix 1 for personnel involved) and professional dialogue in the following contexts:

- 1 Processes for engagement with schools in relation to outcomes for young people in the Senior phase in order to support the improvement agenda.
- 2 Support for schools in taking forward the areas identified for improvement.
- 3 Provision for young people following a broad range of pathways, including vulnerable and care-experienced young people.

The initial feedback session held at the end of the 2-day visit was overwhelmingly positive about the work being done and about the culture of trust and purposeful collaboration that exists between schools and the central services involved. It was stated that the wider system might benefit from the practice and approaches established in SLC. That said, some initial areas to take forward were agreed and further explored during follow up professional dialogue involving members of the core team. (See appendix 2 for personnel involved).

The following key findings were identified:

### **Key Strengths**

Relationships with secondary Head Teachers are strong and centred around a culture of openness, transparency, and mutual respect. School leaders engage in robust peer and local authority support and challenge and are provided with an appropriate balance of central direction and individual empowerment.

The existing mechanisms for school leaders for dialogue and engagement with senior officers are robust and cover a wide range of areas with a sharp focus on data, strategy, and improvement. Empowerment and ownership are active and school leaders welcome the processes. Mechanisms of engagement are powerful and strong.

There is a logical and efficient connection between and within the mechanisms of engagement with school leaders. The work undertaken has a clear purpose. The core Collaborative Improvement team members agreed that the mechanisms of engagement in place are agile and fit for purpose.

Relationships with wider stakeholder networks (DHT networks, DYW Coordinators, Subject Networks) are strong. Capacity building and empowerment were identified as a key driver for the mechanisms of engagement explored.

Depute Head Teachers speak positively about opportunities to learn, lead and help shape key policy and practices. Of those sampled, Depute Head Teachers and wider groups feel they have a voice and a platform to engage with local strategy and welcome the opportunity to take things forward. They describe an open-door culture where nothing is 'off the table' and where they have seen the positive impact of their own actions.

Of the examples shared there was a strong connectedness and coherence of planning between Headteacher groups and wider network groups, all of which put children and young people at the centre. There is a strong sense of confidence and a shared commitment to improvement and professional learning.

The Covid pandemic tested the efficiency of the network of mechanisms in place to manage and lead change both at local authority and at school level. School leaders noted that they felt supported and heard, and very much part of a collective team, with shared responsibility across the entire school estate. A specific example of this was the collective work to implement the Alternative Certification Model which, under very challenging circumstances, was a robust and consistently well executed operation. This was validated by Education Scotland's review of ACM during lockdown.

Working from a position of strength with regard to the curricular developments within the senior phase across secondary schools, there is a significant effort being made by secondary schools to improve their senior phase offer in line with learner aspirations and Labour Market information. This was supported

strategically through the central teams, including the Youth Employability service. There is also a focus on systematic skills development (SLC Skills framework) built into wider curriculum reform.

The range of programmes in place to support vulnerable and care-experienced young people was commended as an example of strong practice.

### **Areas for consideration**

The direct involvement of the Youth Employability team in the discussions with schools relating to positive destinations and senior phase planning was identified as a practical step to support effective planning.

There is scope to consider how the mechanisms of engagement with secondary headteachers could be extended to include the primary sector. This could provide a coherent approach to progression/transition and the development of effective pathways linked to the full learner journey. However, as the primary sector was not reported on during the Collaborative Improvement activity, the team did acknowledge that this may already be in hand.

There is scope to further develop and strengthen partnership working between the Youth Employability Service and the Primary Sector, especially during transition phases. Developing the Young Workforce has a 3-18 agenda and could be used as context to plan the wider offer as children progress through school stages. The South Lanarkshire Skills Framework could provide a commonality of language to underpin curriculum planning and learning, teaching and assessment.

(The South Lanarkshire Skills Framework was identified as a possible scaffold upon which Headteachers could work together across sectors. The Framework could be used as a self-reflection/evaluation tool to explore curriculum rationales/progression and opportunities linked to partnership working moving forward).

Consideration could be given to how the Resource could make the wider curricular offer to schools and young people more consistent, which may improve uptake and retention rates in some courses or programmes. One aspect of this activity may be to revisit communication with parents and families. There was an acknowledgement of the complexity involved in providing bespoke programmes and courses for a diverse group of learners across the authority.

The Resource could consider how to support schools with curriculum structure eg. how curriculum and timetable alignment could benefit continuity and progression of the learner journey across the authority. This could create efficiencies for service providers eg colleges and or work placements.

From a more general perspective, the potential of the networks to be utilised as workstreams to produce resources, policies building on best practice across SLC was noted.

**All areas for improvement/consideration will be taken forward as improvement priorities in the Resource Service Plan for 2023 and reported on accordingly.**

**Since the South Lanarkshire/ADES/ES Collaborative Improvement in October, South Lanarkshire Council Education Resources has developed a Collaborative Improvement programme for secondary schools which will provide a mechanism to facilitate peer self-evaluation. 3 schools will pilot this programme in session 2023/24.**

Appendix 1

Name	Organisation	Additional Information
John McKay	Uddingston Grammar	Head Teacher
Andy Smith	Larkhall Academy	Head Teacher
Robert Stewart	Biggar High School	Head Teacher
Brenda McLachlan	Stonelaw High School	Head Teacher
Liz White	Calderglen High School	Head Teacher
Skayne Dodds	Calderside Academy	Head Teacher
Annette Alexander	Duncanrig Secondary School	Head Teacher
John Reilly	Holy Cross High School	Head Teacher
Barbara Lee	Lesmahagow High School	Head Teacher
Joanne Sturgeon	Cathkin High School	Head Teacher
Waheeda Huq	Strathaven Academy	Head Teacher
Fiona Mullen	St Andrew's and St Bride's High School	Head Teacher
Allison Craig	Trinity High School	Head Teacher
Steve Duffy	Carlisle High School	Head Teacher
Jeff Warden	Lanark Grammar School	Head Teacher
Martin McCabe	Duncanrig Secondary School	Depute Head Teacher
Diane Osprey	Calderside Academy	Depute Head Teacher
Stephen Brogan	St John Ogilvie High School	Depute Head Teacher
Gillian Pollock	Lanark Grammar	Depute Head Teacher
Fiona Murphy	Calderglen High School	Depute Head Teacher
Scott Atkins	Duncanrig Secondary School	Depute Head Teacher
Pierangelo Palombo	Stonelaw High School	Depute Head Teacher
Lynsey Clark	Calderglen High School	Depute Head Teacher
Elizabeth Clingan	Biggar High School	Depute Head Teacher
Daniel Brennan	Trinity High School	Depute Head Teacher
Carla Fagan	Holy Cross High School	Depute Head Teacher
Stewart Miller	Kear Campus	Depute Head Teacher
Rhona James	Strathaven Academy	Depute Head Teacher
Jacqueline Wallace	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Improvement Manager
Leeanne Kelly	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Link Officer
Garry Maguire	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Link Officer
Fiona Leggate	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Link Officer
Nav Munogee	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Link Officer
Laura Mitchell	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Link Officer
Maureen Farr	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Link Officer
Linda Gardner	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Link Officer
Scott McDermott	South Lanarkshire Council	Youth Employability Service
Robert Burgess	South Lanarkshire Council	MCR Project Coordinator

Appendix 2

Name	Organisation	Additional Information
Tony McDaid	South Lanarkshire Council	Executive Director of Education
Stewart Nicolson	South Lanarkshire Council	Head of Education – Senior Phase
Jill Pringle	South Lanarkshire Council	Service Manager – Curriculum and Quality Improvement Service
Douglas Hashagen	South Lanarkshire Council	Youth Employability Manager
Kathleen McCormick	South Lanarkshire Council	Quality Lead Officer – Senior Phase/DYW
Colin Grant	ADES	Executive Partner
Alasdair MacLeod	ADES	Stirling Council
Janie O'Neill	ADES	North Lanarkshire Council
Claire Chreighton	ADES	East Renfrewshire Council
Fiona Grant	ADES	Highland Council
Campbell Hornell	ADES	Midlothian Council
Pamela DiNardo	Education Scotland	Senior Regional Advisor - West
Craig Melrose	Education Scotland	SLC Attainment Advisor
Margaret Livingston	Education Scotland	HMI
Klaus Mayer	Education Scotland	Senior Education Officer - DYW