

## **CIRCLE Implementation in East Lothian**

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### **East Lothian Council relaunched CIRCLE across all their Primary and Secondary schools using a committed implementation strategy.**

East Lothian Council began its journey with the CIRCLE Framework in 2018. We recognised the benefit of it and how it could support us in enhancing our Universal offer, which would in turn, improve access to Additional and Targeted supports as appropriate. However, our initial implementation lacked capacity to drive it forward, and therefore CIRCLE was not being used to its full advantage by many schools or indeed at all in some instances.

Following the post-Covid return to schools and the added challenges of the current financial climate, it became more imperative than ever to prioritise universal inclusive practice and see improvement in this area. We went 'back to the drawing board' with CIRCLE and embarked upon an audit of current practice across the whole education service. This included measures such as: moderating GIRFEC planning; considering internal school review outcomes; and analysing questionnaire responses developed using NAIT's Indicators for Implementation. This audit informed our delivery model which was designed to mirror East Lothian's staged-intervention framework of Universal, Additional and Targeted support.

Our Universal offer consisted of online training available regularly throughout the 2022/23 school year with the option to focus on either the Inclusive Classroom Scale or Participation Scale depending on the practitioner's experience of CIRCLE. This was open to Primary and Secondary staff at all levels. Our Additional offer ensured that key groups had access to bespoke training tailored to their role e.g. Support for Learning teachers, ASN Auxiliaries, probationers etc. Our Targeted offer focused on specific schools who had been identified from a range of data measures. These schools engaged in whole staff in-person professional learning, as well as bespoke sessions for key staff and follow-up opportunities with identified leads within their school.

The two CIRCLE tools themselves were also developed following the initial audit process, ensuring they were user-friendly and easily accessible in digital formats. To support this, we developed a dedicated webpage populated with resources, tutorial videos, and examples of successful practice, and promoted this at every professional learning event.

The entire process took around 18 months and was supplemented by a short-life working group, to support implementation. This group consisted of representatives from Primary and Secondary education (practitioners, senior leaders and Support for Learning), the local authority's Inclusion and Wellbeing Service including Educational Psychology, as well as Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

Having a dedicated implementation team as well as two local authority leads with protected time to drive this work forward were critical success factors, as well as:

- CIRCLE being included in East Lothian Council's Accessibility Strategy which then informed the inclusion of CIRCLE in our schools' Working Time Agreement
- Having a clear, shared vision for inclusive practice which aligned with other local authority processes and services

- Having access to efficient online tools which supported collaborative working across services
- Engaging in robust information gathering at the beginning and end of the process to measure impact and ensure next steps were data-informed
- Remaining within the agreed scope and timeline of the implementation plan

Our recent data indicates the biggest improvement in three key areas:

- Consistent use of CIRCLE as a core part of the Child's Planning Framework
- Staff encouraging each other to take responsibility for inclusive practice
- The use of CIRCLE resources to support collaborative working

East Lothian is committed to the continued implementation of CIRCLE. We have ensured that local authority, Primary and Secondary colleagues understand the expectations for their roles going forward. A data gathering calendar has been agreed so that we can continue to track the long term impact of this implementation, building on the positive changes we have already begun to see. Our focus will shift to Early Years for 2023/24.