
NORTHERN ALLIANCE REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PHASE 2)

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Northern Alliance is a Regional Improvement Collaborative [RIC] between eight local authorities, across the north of Scotland: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar [Western Isles], Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands. The Northern Alliance is committed to improving the educational and life chances of children and young people.
- 1.2 Each RIC has been asked by a joint Steering Group, consisting of the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and Local Government to produce a Regional Improvement Plan. The Regional Improvement Plan is tasked with outlining how the RIC intends to reduce inequalities and target improvement in the four national priorities from the National Improvement Framework [NIF].
- 1.3 The development of the Regional Improvement Plan has been part of an ongoing iterative process. The first draft of the Northern Alliance Regional Plan was submitted to Education Scotland for feedback on the 30th January 2018. Feedback was received from the Chief Inspector of Education/Chief Executive on the 22nd February 2018. The Northern Alliance has sought to build on the comments received and incorporate this into the next phase of the Plan.
- 1.4 In terms of next steps following feedback from Education Scotland, the Northern Alliance was advised to engage all stakeholders and seek their views on the developing plan. Consultations and engagement sessions took place from mid-April to mid-June with a range of stakeholders: teaching staff, parents, children and young people, elected members and unions. It was agreed that each local authority was responsible for undertaking consultation and engagement sessions in their respective areas. An evaluation report of all the qualitative feedback gathered from across the region has been produced for the collaborative. The findings of which, will be considered ahead of the Phase 2 submission.
- 1.5 In support of the delivery of the Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2) the collaborative is drafting a workforce plan which will identify the resources available to ensure workstreams are effectively resourced. This workforce plan will also consider resource from Education Scotland.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Community Services Committee:

- I. Comment on the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2);
- II. Endorse the continued work of the Northern Alliance; and
- III. Note that the Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2) will be submitted to Education Scotland on 3 September 2018 for sign off and agree that any amendments which may be required are delegated to the Head of Education: Lifelong Learning and Support in consultation with the Head of Education: Learning and Teaching, the Executive Director of Customer Services and the Policy Lead for Education.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The Northern Alliance is a Regional Improvement Collaborative [RIC] between eight local authorities, across the north of Scotland: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar [Western Isles], Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands. The Northern Alliance is committed to improving the educational and life chances of children and young people.
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5.0 DETAIL

5.1 KEY FINDINGS/ PROPOSALS

5.1.2 The following high-level priorities are outlined in the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2):

- Priority 1: Improvement in attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy
- Priority 2: Closing the outcome gap between the most and least disadvantages children
- Priority 3: Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Priority 4: Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations of all young people.

5.1.2 The priorities are aligned to the aims of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the NIF. However, while the priorities outlined in the Regional Improvement Plan highlight the aim of the NIF, the activities and outlook of the Northern Alliance are far broader. The collaborative champions a child and family-centred approach to address the achievement gap and to drive improvement. In support of realising the priorities, there are 13 workstream programmes. The collaborative seeks to work in a multi-layered way. Some of the workstream programmes, are directed, for example, the Emerging Literacy, Numeracy and Maths Attainment and Modern Foreign Languages programmes contribute to directly improving attainment. A significant number of the workstream outlined in the Plan (Phase 2) cut across all the priorities. It is important to note that not all schools will be involved in all improvement activities at any given time.

5.2 Argyll and Bute Council – Northern Alliance Consultation

5.2.1 Feedback from the Argyll and Bute Council consultation exercise on the Regional Improvement Plan found that the majority of those consulted – school staff, central team and senior management - were supportive of the plan.

5.3 Development of the Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2)

5.3.1 The development of Phase 2 of the Regional Improvement Plan has sought to identify how the collaborative will measure progress as well as refine existing measures. The Performance and Data Sharing workstream continues to work closely with Education Scotland to develop a data sharing agreement. The Performance and Data Sharing group has also continued to identify key data sets to provide baseline data for the collaborative.

5.3.2 Several of the workstreams are maturing and others are now emerging and beginning to embed across the collaborative. The workforce plan will ensure that resources are effectively deployed to support their delivery. To this end, the Northern Alliance seeks to build on its long-standing collaboration to effectively develop a robust plan with clear workstreams and implementation strategies.

5.3.3 A crucial step in developing Phase 2 of the Regional Improvement Plan has been consulting with stakeholders and evaluating the feedback and comments received. The Northern Alliance is keen to develop distributive leadership at all levels and ensure that a practitioner informed approach shapes the collaborative's activities.

5.3.4 The work of the collaborative positively supports the Education Strategy key themes of Our Children Our Future.

5.4 NEXT STEPS

5.4.1 The key milestones are indicated below:

| Key Milestone | Timescale |
|---|------------------|
| Northern Alliance Planning and Evaluation Event | 29 June 2018 |
| Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan Phase 2 Review | 26 July 2018 |
| Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2) to be presented to Chief Executives for comment | wk/c 6 Aug 2018 |
| Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2) submitted to Education Scotland | 3 Sept 2018 |

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan is required to be submitted to Scottish Government on the 3rd of September 2018. The priorities within the plan are aligned to the aims of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the NIF. However, while the priorities outlined in the Regional Improvement Plan highlight the aim of the NIF, the activities and outlook of the Northern Alliance are far broader. The collaborative champions a child and family-centred approach to address the achievement gap and to drive improvement. In support of realising the priorities, there are 13 workstream programmes. These workstreams will enhance and support the improvement work being undertaken by the Education Service in Argyll and Bute and support the vision and strategy Our Children, Their Future.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Policy In line with national Education policy
- 7.2 Financial At this point in time there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.
- 7.3 Legal At this point there is no direct legal implications.
- 7.4 HR The Northern Alliance is currently finalising its workforce plan, which will be submitted to Education Scotland on the 3 September 2018. The workforce plan will seek to ensure equitable resource allocation, develop and implement protocols for joint working and provide greater clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. Moreover, the Northern Alliance will continuously review workforce allocation.
- 7.5 Equalities The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan Complies with equalities requirements.
- 7.6 Risk Not supporting the Northern Alliance's work outlined in the Regional Improvement Plan could create a negative reputational risk. The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan supports the delivery of the LOIP through the delivery of the NIF and the National Governance review. The collaborative's Plan support education outcomes and Getting It Right For Every Child [GIRFEC] delivery across the authority. Failure to support the Regional

Improvement Plan may cause reputational damage for Argyll and Bute Council and put into question the organisation's commitment to raising attainment and closing the gap. The risk is low.

- 7.7 Customer Service The Northern Alliance seeks to ensure that consistent improvement support is available to the entire region. The Northern Alliance is committed to ensuring staff have access to the practical improvement support they need, when they need it. A risk is that this message is not clearly communicated to staff and there is a lack of understanding amongst schools regarding the role of the Northern Alliance. To minimise this risk a communications strategy and plan 2018-2019 has been developed. Following consultations and engagement events with all stakeholders the Northern Alliance has also taken cognisance of the feedback received and sought to build on the ideas expressed to improve communications. The risk is low.

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