

Appendix 2

# REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

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## Phase 4 Plan 2022-2025



Northern  
Alliance

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Images courtesy of Northern Alliance Local Authorities:

Aberdeen City Council

Aberdeenshire Council

Argyll & Bute Council

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Highland Council

Moray Council

Orkney Islands Council

Shetland Islands Council

# FOREWORD

On behalf of the Northern Alliance Convention of Convenors, I am pleased to share the Phase 4 Plan for our Regional Improvement Collaborative. The 2022-2025 Plan sets out how we, the Northern Alliance, will continue on our journey of collaboration and improvement with all of our learners at the heart of activity.

As the Phase 3 plan has concluded, we have carried many lessons forward with us. This is complemented by the fact that we have aimed to meaningfully co-construct how we move forward by getting to the heart of what matters to you.



I am delighted to see the rich content of the discussions from across the region reflected in the Phase 4 regional improvement priorities.

As part of that process of co-construction, we were able to engage and draw upon the voices and experiences of children and young people directly in the formulation of this plan. Our learners are our greatest asset and through this next phase of regional working, we want our learners to become agents of change.

The priorities and processes within the phase 4 plan form our treasure map which will guide us toward collective improvement as a system. We are all part of the Northern Alliance 'system'- our learners, parents and partners, as well as our local authority staff members who work hard to get it right for every child, every day. By engaging in this plan and working together across every school, nursery and education service, we can build a strong, clear voice across the Northern Alliance so that we can influence current Scottish Education developments and ultimately, improve outcomes for all our learners.

## Councillor Gillian Owen, Convention of Convenors Chair



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# INTRODUCTION

The Northern Alliance is a Regional Improvement Collaborative between eight local authorities, across the North and West of Scotland: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar (Western Isles), Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands, with a shared vision to improve the educational and life chances of all our learners.

Unique to the Northern Alliance is its diversity with a mix of urban, remote and rural and island Local Authorities. Covering 58.4% of the landmass of Scotland, the Northern Alliance is the largest RIC in geographical size, yet represents a small percentage of the Scottish population. The geography and common challenges experienced across the region moved the collaborative to identify new ways of working and adopt a shared approach to the communities it represents in the North and West of Scotland and the islands.



Originally coming together to collectively tackle a shared challenge of teacher recruitment and retention, the Northern Alliance remains committed to improving outcomes through collaboration, closing the gap which exists across our wide and varied communities.

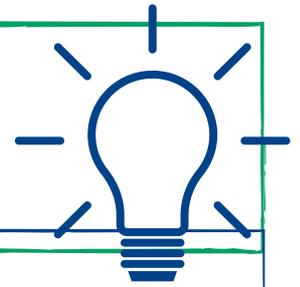
As we continue to mature as a collaborative, we are encouraged by the increasing numbers of practitioners engaging in improvement activity and opportunities to connect, sharing and mobilising practice, knowledge and experience.

With a focus on deepening connections between wellbeing and learning, the Phase 4 Plan, shaped around the Rights Drivers for Whole System success[1], sets out how we will drive forward improvement through a strong collaborative culture to create change that leads to impact for all of our learners.

**Regional Improvement Forum**

[1] [The Right Drivers for Whole System Success, M.Fullan](#)

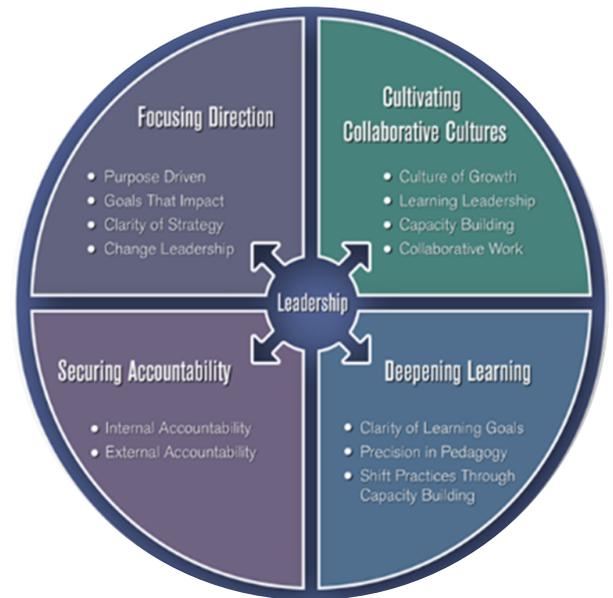
# OUR STRATEGY



## *A Framework for Improvement*

As we embark upon our Phase 4 improvement journey, we are building on learning which we have gained during previous phases of improvement. During Phase 3, we developed a strategy for improvement through collaboration which is designed to build coherence across local, regional and national policy and practice.

We make use of the four components within Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn's Coherence Framework[2] to help us create the right conditions for coherence to grow: Focusing Direction; Cultivating Collaborative Cultures; Deepening Learning; and Securing Accountability. Detail around how our improvement strategy connects with each component can be found below.



<p><b>Our Vision</b> <i>Focusing Direction</i></p> <p>Developing a culture of collaboration, sharing of expertise and creating local and regional networks to improve the educational and life chances of our children and young people</p>	<p><b>Collaboration Framework</b> <i>Cultivating Collaborative Cultures</i></p> <p>Developed as a form of self-evaluation, this framework, based on research and expertise, helps us collaborate meaningfully from latent to deep collaboration</p>	<p><b>CCITI Model</b> <i>Deepening Learning</i></p> <p>The Northern Alliance Improvement Framework developed to support how we achieve our vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect</li> <li>• Collaborate</li> <li>• Ideas &amp; Innovation</li> <li>• Try Out &amp; Test</li> <li>• Improvement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Improvement Culture</b> <i>Securing Accountability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have shared aims, with clear systems and processes to track and report on progress. There is individual and collective responsibility for achieving the aims set out within our plan.</li> <li>• 'Our Journey' website makes transparent our progress over time using the CCITI model.</li> </ul>
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[2] Coherence, The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems - M. Fullan and J. Quinn

**Focusing Direction** starts with our vision – this ensures we remain focused on our core purpose as a Regional Improvement Collaborative, which is ultimately to improve outcomes for and with our learners through collaboration. Our improvement plan has been developed to capture what matters to our schools, settings and teams, as well as making clear the golden threads which run through local, regional and national priorities.

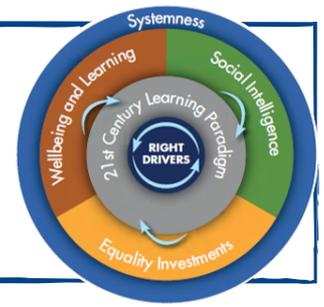
**Cultivating Collaborative Cultures** requires us to have a shared understanding of what it means to meaningfully collaborate - and how it leads to impact. This means that we will work on developing a collaborative culture, as well as systems and processes to support meaningful collaboration. Our Northern Alliance Collaboration Framework helps us to understand what effective collaboration looks and feels like, taking us from 'latent collaboration' to 'deep collaboration'. As our journey of collaborating meaningfully with colleagues and practitioners across the Northern Alliance continues to grow, one-off sessions and opportunities to engage are fewer, with an increased focus on collaborative and practitioner enquiry.

**Deepening Learning** is based on building a sense of connectedness across the Northern Alliance which helps us to share what is working well within and across our settings and teams, as well as working together to deepen our knowledge and understanding of pedagogy and breaking down the barriers to wellbeing and learning, which ultimately will lead to improved outcomes for all our learners. The five steps of the Northern Alliance CCITI Model provide the road map for our journey towards improvement. This strategy also includes the use of an improvement methodology which helps us to understand whether the changes we are making do lead to improvement.

**Securing Accountability** - We are building a collaborative culture that combines individual responsibility for improving outcomes for our learners, collective expectations and corrective action. We have ambitious, shared goals and robust data processes which help us monitor progress over time. We welcome the opportunity to share our progress and learning both internally as part of our own team developments, but also with local and national partners. The Northern Alliance 'Our Journey' website uses the CCITI model to make transparent our progress and learning, using both quantitative and qualitative data, with a range of case studies evidencing impact at class, school, local authority and regional level.



# The Right Drivers for Whole System Success



The repercussions and ripples of the pandemic continue to impact on our schools and settings across Scotland – and will continue to do so for some time to come. It was clear as we prepared for a new phase for improvement across our RIC that we should continue to focus on wellbeing and how it impacts on learning, as well as how we can more effectively break down barriers to wellbeing and learning.

In February 2021, Michael Fullan, an expert in Whole System Change in Education, introduced the world to the Right Drivers for Whole System Success, and these connected with us at a significant time of change in Scottish education.

Over the course of session 2021/22, we have been deepening our knowledge of the Right Drivers for Whole System Success and together, we began to explore what our ‘treasure’, or key areas for improvement were emerging within each of the Drivers. Examples of putting the Drivers into practice, along with practitioners sharing their experiences can be found in Appendix 1 .

### The Right Drivers for Whole System Success

The Human Paradigm	The Bloodless Paradigm
Wellbeing and Learning	Academics Obsession
Social Intelligence	Machine Intelligence
Equality Investments	Austerity
Systemness	Fragmentation

*‘Christakis analyses what he labels as ‘the immediate pandemic period’, ‘the intermediate pandemic period’ and ‘the post-pandemic period’ – a time span covering 2020 to 2024. In practical terms, humans will grapple with chaos, survival, innovative breakthroughs, destructive elements, and more. The best stance we can take is to know that almost everything will be different. In short, this prolonged ambiguity creates a tangible opportunity to make positive change happen.’ [2]*

*"Reflecting on progress across the Phase 3 plan, the speed and scale of the change we have seen across all levels of the system would have been incomprehensible just a few years ago. The Northern Alliance adoption of Michael Fullan's 4 Right Drivers for Whole System Success has been a valuable lens through which we can make sense of the process."*

Early Years Workstream Lead

# Shaping the Plan Around the Right Drivers



As we began to develop our Phase 4 Plan, it was more important than ever to ensure we focused on priorities that mattered to our teams and learners, as well as join the dots with local and national policy – focusing direction for everyone. As a Regional Improvement Collaborative, we committed to shaping our Phase 4 Plan around the Right Drivers.

Feedback from our networks informed us that the Right Drivers helped teams to focus on what was important at a time of turmoil and change - as several practitioners stated, 'They just make sense'.



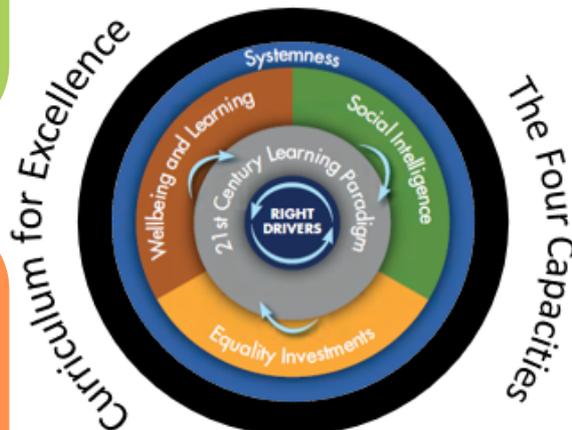
## What Matters to You?

### The 'Right Drivers'

- Wellbeing and learning
- Social Intelligence
- Equality Investments
- Systemness

### National Policy

- GIRFEC
- National Improvement Framework
- Developing the Young Workforce
- Realising the Ambition



### Our Vision:

Developing a culture of collaboration, sharing of expertise and creating local and regional networks to improve the educational life chances of our children and young people

# Engaging with Stakeholders - 'What Matters to You?'



In order to meaningfully engage with practitioners, partners, learners and parents, we took the drivers on the road across the Northern Alliance and asked everyone, 'What matters to you?' We used themes emerging from our work with the Right Drivers over the past session to frame our discussions.



We engaged with over 450 people and generated over 1400 pieces of feedback, which then went on to identify the themes that shape our phase 4 priorities.



In partnership with our regional colleagues from Education Scotland, we carried out a collaborative thematic analysis of the data, which involved data familiarisation, generating codes, searching for themes and naming and defining themes.[3]

Using the themes which represent what matters to our stakeholders, the next step involved working alongside our Local Authority Directors, Heads of Service and Chief Education Officers to identify the 'golden threads' that weave through Local Authority and national priorities.

These threads enabled us to focus direction and identify our new Phase 4 improvement priorities, which are shared on page 10.



[3] Braun and Clarke, 2008.

# PHASE 4 PRIORITIES

The diagram below outlines the key priorities developed for each Driver Workstream.



A sample of the feedback gathered from our learners, practitioners, parents and partners is shared over the next four pages, making clear the strong connection between the voices of our stakeholders and how we plan to put these priorities into practice. Priorities with stars are shared across workstreams. Detailed plans outlining aims and measures have been included at Appendix 3.

# Wellbeing and Learning

Focus for improvement within Early Years, Primary, Secondary, CLD and Digital - including Gaelic Medium:

You said...

Workstream Priorities

- Relationships built on mutual trust and respect that will support effective learner-teacher interactions
- Exemplification of creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning that will help inspire and support practitioners
- Ensure that the terminology of wellbeing is not just a word, but is immersed in practice. How can this be done effectively?

- Collegiality amongst staff - peer assessment, moderation of teaching and learning, planning and achievement of a level
- Learners voice and increasing empowerment to co-develop and design learning opportunities
- Partnerships between school, pupils and the community linked to Children's Rights
- 'Nothing for us without us'

- Is the physical school the most appropriate place for learning for every child?
- Capitalising on children's wider environment, sense of self in community, in out and beyond
- Importance of place
- Using digital to allow learners (and staff) to collaborate with others across the Northern Alliance.
- How do we use digital technology to expand the curriculum for all young people?

## FEELING WELL AND LEARNING WELL:

1. Get better at making learning more meaningful - deepening connections and motivation to learn
2. Get it right for every learner through our pedagogy and culture - breaking down barriers\*
3. Get better at reaching shared expectations within learning, teaching and assessment
4. Improve how we teach and learn through working together on research and improvement projects

## Putting the Plan into Practice

- **Curriculum Design** - *developing pedagogical practice, skills and pathways*
- **Learner Rights and Voice** - *deepening engagement and building agency*
- **Learning, Teaching and Assessment** - *sharing and mobilising practice, breaking down barriers\* and building shared expectations*
- **Collaborative Professional Enquiry** - *working together to solve problems and develop innovative approaches supported by professional learning opportunities such as the World Education Summit*

# Social Intelligence

Focus for improvement within Early Years, Primary, Secondary, CLD and Digital - including Gaelic Medium:

You said...

- Create a trusting ethos in school where it is safe to share. Sharing a common language between different services
- Collaboration needs to be authentic and purposeful
- Use tools to build partnership collaboration and discussion
- Shared goals are key - and staff communicating/articulating this with each other
- Discrete focussed work on how best to create connectedness and create an ethos of collaboration.

- We are going through the pain of change. I'm learning that there is a critical mass who want to collaborate.
- Creating/managing time for people to reflect/discuss/share/support and challenge each other
- Clear communication within and between areas, with improved outcomes at the heart

- Open and honest discussion between schools. Sharing best practice and what is working. Not just in small clusters but across the authorities and Northern Alliance.
- You should work with someone who you feel safe and happy with and you can feel more confident at expressing your feelings and thoughts.
- If you are connecting with each other you will get some friends

Workstream Priorities

## HOW WE WORK AND LEARN TOGETHER:

1. Build a shared understanding of how we can meaningfully collaborate
2. Increase opportunities for us to collaborate both at local level and across the Northern Alliance
3. Work together with our local authority and national partners to make a joined-up offer for professional learning

Putting the Plan into Practice

- **Professional learning opportunities** to develop a shared understanding of meaningful collaboration linking theory, policy and practice
- **Online resource hub** to support collaboration at class, school, team, cluster, local authority or regional level
- **Opportunities for online collaboration** linked to individual school/ setting/ team improvement priorities as a common theme\*\*
- **Development and creation of an online professional learning community**, streamlining and sharing local, regional and national professional learning opportunities, providing opportunities for collaboration.

# Equality Investments

Focus for improvement within Early Years, Primary, Secondary, CLD and Digital - including Gaelic Medium:

You said...

Workstream Priorities

- Working closely with parents and partners to identify barriers to learning and address these
- I would like to see a way of giving a voice to the parents who do not feel articulate or confident enough to be involved in parent forums.
- Voices from young people and families should be at the heart of planning and improvement

HOW WE BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO WELLBEING AND LEARNING:

1. Get better at working with our learners and their families so that together we can break down their barriers to wellbeing and learning\*
2. Make sure we are making best use of our data, measures and money to help us improve outcomes for every learner
3. Work together to shape policy and practice and build a shared understanding of how we get it right for every learner\*

- As a staff, sharing, trialling ideas and supporting each other
- Ethos – supporting and valuing differences across the school
- Rights and responsibilities around UNCRC need to be shared, accessible and understood by all
- Ensuring that we have appropriate tools to measure impact of interventions.

Putting the Plan into Practice

- **Learner and family participation** – network, share practice and engage with children and young people and partners to improve how we work with learners and their families when there are barriers to wellbeing and learning\*
- **Improve access to and engagement with meaningful data** to inform improvement at class, school, team, local authority and regional level – development of a data for improvement framework in partnership with South East RIC
- **Build confidence and clarity around national policy** such as the Morgan Review, The Promise and UNCRC and work together around how we can use policy to improve our practice at class/ school/ team/ local authority level

- How will improvement be measured? It needs to show improvement rather than evaluation against a standard or against other schools
- The right data that informs our unique contexts
- If you do things by yourself it can eat you up inside. A problem shared is a problem halved. It's easier when you're working together