

# Systemness

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

You said...

- Leadership skills are required in order to effect a collaborative approach with staff involvement and empowerment
- Recognition that leadership occurs at all levels and across all members of the learning community - children, young people, teachers, CLD staff, parents...
- Using collaboration to tackle strategically the tough challenges that persist across the years and establishing conditions for solutions to be developed

- Need to take and manage risk and be allowed to succeed or fail and then try again
- Know your setting and the culture of your community to inspire and build together
- Young people and families need to be included and equal partners at the table
- Young people being "fearless agents of their own destinies"

- Actively share and broadcast change makers success (irrespective of size) to motivate others
- Quality improvement - opportunities to work with teams on small change projects - learn what works but also learn about what doesn't work
- How do we ensure the importance of the north is really captured when national policy is being formulated?

Workstream Priorities

## WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE OUR SYSTEM:

1. Build collective responsibility and engagement in improving our Northern Alliance system – with and for everyone!
2. Build a shared understanding of what makes a good leader – wherever we are in our learning journey
3. Get better at working together as a team to improve we learn and how we learn

Putting the Plan into Practice

- **Professional learning and networking opportunities** to share how Fullan's Right Drivers for Whole System Success can support teams to drive forward improvement together
- **Develop and engage** with a shared set of principles for leading improvement – including culture, systems and processes
- **Opportunities to connect and collaborate** with schools / settings/ teams with similar improvement priorities\*\*
- **Work together** to create the conditions for collective efficacy to flourish within and across our teams

# Connecting with National Policy and Drivers



The Phase 4 Plan has been shaped over time by practitioners in schools, settings and teams across the Northern Alliance, as well as learners and their families. It is also influenced by local and national priorities and closely aligns with the National Improvement Framework[4] and the Scottish Attainment challenge[5].



At the core of our plan, we will work to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of every child and young person across all regional improvement activity as detailed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child[6].

We believe our phase 4 priorities will strengthen our approaches to collaboration across the Northern Alliance and ultimately improve how we work together to improve outcomes for and with every learner in the Northern Alliance. Learner rights permeate all drivers and priorities at a local, regional and national level - strong connections which will help to focus direction for everyone moving forward.



[4] [Achieving Excellence and Equity, 2022 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan](#)

[5] [The Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model – Regional/Local Level](#)

[6] [A summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

# EVALUATING PROGRESS



## Data Processes

Data processes developed during Phase 3 will continue to help us to understand how we are realising the ambition of our vision.

We make use of a range of measures and tools – from quantitative measures including numbers of practitioners engaging in activity to qualitative data capturing our experiences of collaboration and resulting impact on learners.

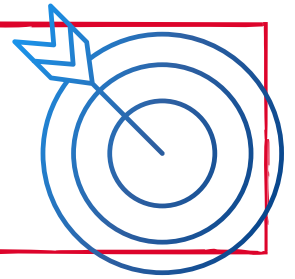
Our case studies and improvement projects capture context specific learning - sharing what works and providing the opportunity to support improvement in a range of new contexts across our Northern Alliance system.



We have a robust system to help us monitor and capture improvement activity. The Model for Improvement helps us to create aims and measures which reflect our own unique contexts. It also helps us to take a shared approach to improvement. Each month, we monitor progress towards the aims set out in our improvement plan. We are curious about our progress and if there are any problems or delays, we work together to try out and test shared theories of action. We are transparent about our data and we share our improvement progress in our dedicated site - Our Journey.

Read more about how we will evidence impact in our Theory of Action at Appendix 3.

# A Targeted and Universal Approach



As a Regional Improvement Collaborative, our ultimate aim is to improve outcomes for and with our learners through collaboration and building a sense of collective responsibility. Therefore, it is important to capture improvement within the wider system as well as within our own workstreams.

That is why we will be using targeted measures to monitor improvement at workstream level – evaluating improvement in outcomes with the teams we work with directly. But also, universal measures to understand whether our theories of action are leading to improvement in the wider system.

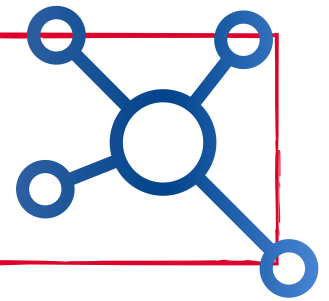


Some of our national measures can help us do that. But we have also identified measures which allow us to monitor collaboration and improvement in a bespoke way and to help us understand the extent to which our system is cultivating that collaborative culture we aspire to as a Regional Improvement Collaborative.





# Connecting with our Local Authorities and Partners



Communication is key in creating a collaborative culture across our RIC. Throughout Phase 4 we will continue to work towards achieving our goal of deepening connections with all levels of our Northern Alliance system. We also want to ensure equitable access to opportunities to connect with fellow practitioners, and to collaborate through professional enquiry activity and professional learning.

In order to further improve communication and engagement with our phase 4 plan, members of our Northern Alliance central team have the added role of linking with one of our eight Local Authorities in order to:

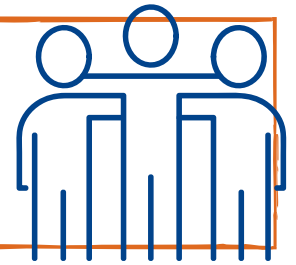
- share information on Northern Alliance activity,
- gather feedback from a local perspective on how activity is adding value; and to
- facilitate making connections and sharing practice that will support both regional and Local Authority activity.

Link Officers engage with their Local Authority Central Teams monthly, Head Teacher groups quarterly, and other practitioner/officer groups as agreed, building a more consistent approach to information sharing and gathering. In addition to local authority links, we also have officers who engage with regional and national partners and our Youth Advisory Group on a monthly basis.

Throughout Phase 4 we will also be updating our website to create a more effective information portal for practitioners and partners, as well as increasing our use of social media to enhance our reach across our RIC.



# GOVERNANCE



In order to bring our plan to life, we have a strong Northern Alliance network of people to take forward our shared priorities. Detail about each of the central groups in the diagram below and be found on the next page.





### **Workstream Leads**

A team of seconded practitioners and officers take forward improvement activity to achieve aims and priorities, each linking with members of the Education Scotland Northern Team, practitioner networks, learners and wider partners

- Wellbeing and Learning - *with a focus on Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Digital*
- Social Intelligence - *with a focus on collaboration*
- Equality Investments - *with focus on Inclusion and ASN, and Equalities and Diversity*
- Systemness - *with a focus on building agency and collective responsibility*

### **Project Management and Improvement**

This team provides support and challenge for our workstreams in relation to progress within the Regional Improvement Plan, data analysis, budget monitoring and communication with stakeholders.

### **Regional Improvement Lead**

The RIC Lead oversees the strategic direction of the Regional Improvement Collaborative and communicates progress at a national level. The Lead meets with the Quality Improvement Manager and Project Officer weekly.

### **Regional Improvement Forum**

Directors, Heads of Service and Chief Education Officers from the eight Local Authorities work with the Education Scotland Senior Regional Advisor to provide support and challenge in order to drive improvement within our plan.

### **Youth Advisory Group**

Established in late 2021, the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) captures youth voice and aims to strengthen youth participation in Northern Alliance developments. Members include MSYPs for each of our local authorities.

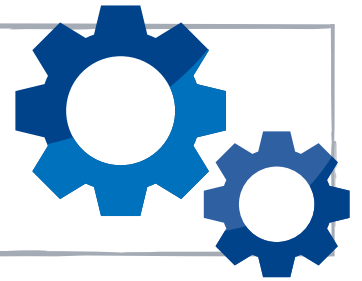
### **Regional Improvement Advisory Forum**

Membership includes Head Teachers, Education Psychology Service, Higher Education, Unions and the Scottish Government. This group provides support and challenge in relation to progress and priorities.

### **Convention of Convenors**

Local Authority Education Policy Leads discuss and advise on the strategy of the Northern Alliance, reviewing progress through regular updates.

# Our Northern Alliance System



The above diagram shares our five workstreams, as well as advisory and governance groups which challenge and support workstream teams. Our workstreams work alongside practitioners, learners, families and partners to realise the ambitions set out within our phase 4 plan. People and processes can only come together effectively when they have a shared vision and commitment to work towards. The Right Drivers for Whole System Success work alongside our Northern Alliance vision to help us focus our direction and move forward together. Within the Right Drivers for Whole System Success, Michael Fullan describes Systemness as:

*“When students, teachers, and others at the local and middle levels are helped to think differently about their systems leading to pathways of action that foster greater clarity, collaboration, and ownership of improvement.”*

Our young people face yet unknown challenges and opportunities as a result of climate change and advancing technologies. We are also grappling with the repercussions of a global pandemic, as well as the uncertainties which currently exist within our education system. Never has there been such a need for us to take collective responsibility for building clarity and bringing about improvement together. Learner rights are at the heart of this Northern Alliance phase 4 plan – as are the rights of all members of our system to have their voices heard and to be active in shaping our direction. This plan is not a plea for engagement or indeed an invitation to engage, but a call to action for everyone to take collective responsibility in bringing about whole system success.



*“A deliberate attempt to realize the system you are in; and the system you should want.”*  
Michael Fullan



## APPENDIX 1 - ENGAGING WITH THE DRIVERS - VOICES FROM ACROSS THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE

Below we share examples of how we have been engaging with the Right Drivers over session 2021/22, along with practitioner feedback on their experiences. This activity will continue to be developed and scaled up over the life of the Phase 4 Plan

### Wellbeing and Learning

#### Re-imagining your Curriculum Rationale

We have been working alongside local authority central team officers and practitioners in ELC settings, primary and secondary schools to further develop understanding of curriculum design. This includes design tools, which can be used to take forward improvement in schools and settings. Over 250 Senior Leaders and Education Officers registered to be part of the 'Re-imagining your Curriculum Rationale' sessions, with 90% of participants who responded reporting being in the process of evaluating or updating their curriculum rationales at the end of our phase 3 plan.

*"I would love to go more into the drivers." - Teacher*

*"I would definitely like to know more about Michael Fullan's work and how to practically use it to develop a curriculum rationale." Head Teacher*

*"It took me a few weeks to get into the training. I thought it would be more about areas of the curriculum and how we could ensure we were using them to meet the needs of the children [but] ... I feel we learned about how we as a staff team can improve our own practice to make things better for children." - ELC Practitioner*



*"It has been really valuable to connect across the Region with other remote establishments." ELC Practitioner*

#### Interdisciplinary Learning Network

A dedicated interdisciplinary network further strengthens collaboration by providing opportunities to discuss and share practice. This has included a focus on ASN and relationships in the context of curriculum and interdisciplinary learning.

Hear from one Head of Primary about her experience of the IDL network [here](#). A Secondary Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher also share their experience [here](#).

An infographic titled 'IDL' (Interdisciplinary Learning) on a lined paper background. It features three large speech bubbles containing the words 'Why?', 'What?', and 'How?'. Below these is a diagram with four colored boxes: 'Opportunities for personal achievement' (orange), 'Interdisciplinary learning' (green), 'Ethos and life of the school as a community' (purple), and 'Curriculum areas and subjects' (blue). The text 'The Foundation the quality of all that is planned for children and young people through their individual and collective experiences' is written across the diagram. In the top right corner, there is a logo for 'Northern Alliance PROFESSIONAL LEARNING'. On the right side, there is a section titled 'Interdisciplinary Learning' with a list of bullet points: 'An opportunity to refocus on IDL and what it can offer our children and young people.', 'Look at the 'Why, What and How' of IDL.', 'Schools and Partners will share how they are being ambitious through the development of bold IDL experiences.', and 'Facilitated discussion and networking.'

## Re-imagining your Skills Agenda

Northern Alliance professional learning resource called 'Reimagining your Skills Agenda', has been co-designed by Senior Leaders, Education Officers, Education Scotland, Teachers, DYW Co-ordinators, DYW Lead officers, Skills Development Scotland and CLD practitioners. This resource is based on the research of Michael Fullan's Right Drivers for Whole System Success and has been designed to support practitioners with evaluating and updating their skills frameworks. The resource was tested with a small cohort, which led to further refinements. The professional learning is designed as a series of four inputs, followed by a 'sharing successes' event to share progress with colleagues and discuss next steps.


*"It is just so good to hear what others are doing"*  
Head Teacher

*"Really enjoyed the discussions and the opportunity to discuss possible ways forward"*  
Teacher

## Retrieval Practice: Leveraging Digital Using Research-informed Practice

During the pandemic a group of teachers from a variety of contexts; primary and secondary, rural and urban, English and Gaelic medium, met regularly online. They considered retrieval practice and how digital tools could enhance the teaching and learning in their settings. They reflected together on their small 'tests of change' as they implemented in their own classrooms new pedagogies and ways of working. Their experiences as a result of collaborative improvement are shared in an [e-book](#).

*"With my P3 class, retrieval practice offers more than just improved memorisation skills, it secures that the learning is long term and it also increases their understanding."*  
Primary Teacher



*"The Northern Alliance curriculum skills CLPL co-design process has been an open, progressive and well led exercise – recognising that the curriculum doesn't operate in a vacuum. For a senior phase curriculum to have currency it must be relevant to (and designed around those it purports to serve) young people, the economy they are entering and wider community. This open, inclusive and data-informed Northern Alliance curriculum design process thus was in accord with Prof Muir's 'Putting learners at the centre' report, recently endorsed by the Scottish Government."*  
Education Support Officer

DYW Live



*"Working with e-Sgoil on DYW Live has allowed hundreds of young people to gain access to role models from the world of work and gain and insight into jobs and industry. This has helped inform, inspire, educate them in what subject choices to make, what skills are needed for particular jobs and made what they learn in the classroom relevant. Real people – real stories."*  
Founders4Schools



### 1+2 Language Development Workstream

*"It is vital that this type of collaboration continues and develops to provide the best opportunities and support for all learners, families and practitioners in our authorities."*

Languages Teacher



### World Education Summit

The World Education Summit is a key professional learning resource funded for practitioners in schools and settings across the Northern Alliance. Moving forward into Phase 4, we will be connecting and collaborating within and across schools to tease out some of the many themes shared within this resource and test out some of the ideas shared within our own contexts. Collaboration with the Welsh Government and with Osiris Educational has been key to planning for implementation and engagement. A [Northern Alliance WES Toolkit](#) has been created to help colleagues navigate the site, host collaborative learning events and signpost to key sessions linked to the phase 4 plan and Michael Fullan's Right Drivers. In collaboration with the 8 local authorities, signposting guides have been created linking the sessions to local authority improvement priorities.



You can hear about one Depute Head Teacher's experience of engaging with the World Education Summit [here](#)



### How are we deepening our collaborations?

*"The best collaborative approach that I have been part of. The structure of the process, the inclusive nature of sessions and quality of content shared are key features which stand out. I really hope to bring and contribute these qualities to collaborative approaches I am part of in the future."*

Secondary DHT



### Breakfast Cart Project

*"When I first started as head teacher, I noticed that throughout the school there were children being taken out of class every morning for something to eat. There were wee groups of children having toast every day. Every teacher had a cupboard with breakfast bars and crisps to give to children who were hungry or had not had snack. They had bought these with their own money. I noticed too that some children were too shy or embarrassed to ask. I decided to look into how we could give breakfast to everyone. Now I know that every child in my school has access to something to fill their tummy first thing every day. Children can have as much or as little as they need. Parents are happy too. One recently said that it was hard getting her son out of bed in the morning but knowing he got breakfast in school was one worry less"*

Head Teacher

*"The approach taken by this school where every pupil is offered a free breakfast will be a model worth following. The research being undertaken by SPIRU at Glasgow Caledonian University has the potential to add knowledge and understanding to national policy and development."*

Poverty and Inequality Commissioner



*"We really look forward to continuing to work with our partners in the Northern Alliance and finding ways we can collaborate to provide useful and impactful learning that continues to promote equity in our schools."*

Project Officer, CPAG

### Collaborative Enquiry

*"Really insightful and thought provoking...got me thinking about my role as a teacher, the struggles families face and how we can best support. A common theme in many schools so feel it is so important."*

Teacher

*"Having a mentor, hearing about the learning of other settings, learning about research methodologies. Making us mindful of using these tools for improvement and measuring impact – no matter how small."*

Teacher





## School Improvement Project - Driving Improvement from Within

By using the Right Drivers as a 'lens for improvement', our school teams have been working together to consider what they can do together to improve outcomes for and with their learners whilst grappling with the challenges of change, uncertainty - and post pandemic! In doing so, there is a focus on building approaches to collaboration and improvement - with the intention of driving improvement from within.

*"The school has made use of inservice time to explore the drivers and the investment in different stakeholders is beginning to pay off. Drivers are featuring within our school's improvement planning process."*  
Central Team Officer

*"Initially the staff were quite sceptical about the project and saw it as just another thing. But the self evaluation process using the Right Drivers has engaged colleagues, leading to great collaboration and agreed outcomes. Staff are also clear about the improvement they want to see."*  
Head Teacher



*"Working parties are positively engaging in the process of change and leading this/ being accountable for their part in this. It feels like as a team we are making progress."*  
Head Teacher

*"What's really powerful about this project is the focus on clear thinking - really understanding deeply before deciding what is needed. Taking time to do it well, something we often underestimate the importance of. This approach is about deep and sustainable change and in this way it is also energising and empowering educators in a different way. We've talked a lot about recovery over the last couple of years, but I think this is about renewal."*  
Sarah Philp, Coach | Psychologist

*"I think the impact of this work is that it has made all staff think carefully about how to embed improvements and be invested in the next steps of the school and improvement priorities. I think it has made us all think carefully about ensuring actions are well planned and thought out to ensure maximum impact"*  
Head Teacher

## APPENDIX 2 - DRIVER WORKSTREAM OVERVIEWS

### Wellbeing and Learning - Learning well and feeling well

| Priority  | NA Context - What will success look like?  | Measurable Aim  | NIF Driver(s)   | SAC Regional Medium-Term Outcomes  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <b>1. Get better at making learning more meaningful - deepening connections and motivation to learn</b> | Outcomes for learners are improved through a relevant and meaningful curriculum that promotes wellbeing and learning. Learners feel well and are more involved in their learning, developing skills to be good at learning and good at life.   | 95% of learners attending schools or settings which are engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream will demonstrate improved wellbeing and learning outcomes* through a relevant and meaningful curriculum by Feb 2025.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum and Assessment</li> <li>School and ELC Improvement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements in engagement, attendance, confidence and wellbeing of children and young people</li> <li>An embedded culture and ethos based on educational equity exists in the education system that promotes high aspirations and recognises broader achievement for all children and young people and their families</li> </ul> |
| <b>2. Get it right for every learner through our pedagogy and culture - breaking down barriers*</b>     | Mental and emotional wellbeing, children's rights and learner voice are central to all we do. Learning environments put learners at the centre. Learners feel safe, included, valued and heard.  | 95% of learners attending schools or settings which are engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream demonstrate an improvement in their wellbeing* by Feb 2025.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum and Assessment</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedded engagement and participation of children and young people, families and communities in the learner journey</li> </ul>  |
| <b>3. Get better at reaching shared expectations within learning, teaching and assessment</b>           | Collaboration at regional and local level is the platform where we come together to explore and share practice. There is a consistent and shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching, assessment and moderation practices. We feel confident, connected and there is greater consistency in expectations and standards. This will lead to improved outcomes for learners. | <p>95% of learners attending schools or settings which are engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream demonstrate improved outcomes* as a result of moderation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment by Feb 2025.</p> <p>95% of practitioners engaging with the Wellbeing and Learning Workstream report increased confidence in their professional judgements by Feb 2025.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School and ELC Improvement</li> <li>Curriculum and Assessment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High quality learning, teaching and assessment, focussing on achieving equity for learners, across Health and Wellbeing, literacy and numeracy</li> <li>Evidence based approaches embedded in the system with continuous refinement/ adaptation based on effective interventions in the local context.</li> </ul>                 |