

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: Thursday 24 August 2023

Report by: Interim Chief Education Officer

Heading: ADES/Education Scotland Collaborative Improvement Review

1. Summary

- 1.1. Renfrewshire's Children's Services undertook Collaborative Improvement (CI) activity in June 2023 where the focus was on the recent work that has been undertaken to improve how we meet the needs of our children and young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN).
- 1.2 The purpose of CI is to share what works well at a local authority level and to support improvement in identified areas of local authority activity. This model is part of a national approach developed by Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and Education Scotland, designed to support improvement, with an expectation that all Local Authorities will take part over a 3-year period.
- 1.3 CI visits involve staff from across Children's Services working with senior colleagues from a range of local council areas identified through the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and a number of colleagues from the national scrutiny body Education Scotland (ES).
- 1.4 In considering the theme for CI, the directorate wanted to better understand readiness and capacity to respond to the challenges and opportunities arising from the lessons learned from the Additional Support Needs review and the subsequent action plan that specifically considers outcomes for learners with additional support needs.
- 1.5 The ADES/ES model notes that ownership of the CI activity sits within the context of the local authority self-evaluation for self-improvement processes. As such, Renfrewshire Council's Children's Services led the design, planning and organisation of the activity.
- 1.6 Planning for the CI activity started in May 2023. Co-development with internal teams and ADES/ES enabled senior officers to scope the parameters of the exercise to ensure learning was appropriate, purposeful and related to existing priorities for Renfrewshire.
- 1.7 Through discussion and in consultation with ADES/ES colleagues a key 'question' was developed to frame the CI review:

‘With the number of children and young people with additional support needs increasing, are we future proofing our universal services in order to improve outcomes for children and young people.’

- 1.8 The purpose and value of the CI activity is to identify potential opportunities for improvement using a multi-lens/external review process drawing on the experience of CI team members, and those involved in the activities themselves. The universal approaches that were to be part of the review were:
 - Flexible Learning Resource (FLR)
 - Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework
 - Renfrewshire’s Nurturing Relationships Approach (RNRA) / Non-Violent Resistance (NVR)
 - Education Scotland National Model - Circle / Renfrewshire’s Inclusive Classroom Environments (RICE)
 - Integrated Children’s Services
- 1.9 Each of these approaches were explored by the CI team separately through scene setting, document analysis, school visits, focus groups and professional dialogue.
- 1.10 The schools which took part in these visits were identified through discussions with the Educational Psychology Team. The sample was created to ensure that ES/ADES members could see the above approaches in a variety of contexts. The visits involved colleagues from ADES and ES meeting with practitioners, pupils and parents to discuss the impact of the universal approaches on them.
- 1.11 The feedback session held at the end of the 3-day review was very positive about the current approaches and about the culture of trust and purposeful collaboration that exists between schools and the central services involved.
- 1.12 Examples of identified strengths are:
 - The vision for inclusion was clear and well understood across agencies and within Education, in all the activities, practitioners demonstrated a clear understanding of what and how they would reach their ambition.
 - The local authority has demonstrated an empowered approach to building capacity within their educational estate by drawing on peer-led and motivated “early adopters” to shape improvements.
 - The local authority is making very effective use of relevant data sets to measure performance and impact.
 - The direction of travel in relation to the flexible learning resources is in line with national and international thinking.
 - Renfrewshire Nurturing Relationship Approaches (RNRA) is well understood across services/agencies and practitioners. There were clear examples of partnership working/multi-agency working.
- 1.13 As part of the collaboration, participants discuss the next steps to continue the improvement journey. These next steps include:
 - The GIRFEC refresh now needs to be embedded in everyday practice resulting in a reduction in the current levels of exclusion.
 - Expanding the universal inclusion approaches into learning, teaching, assessment, and pedagogy to avoid inclusion being narrowly construed as health and wellbeing, relationships, and socio-emotional development.

- Continue to engage with the Early Year Sector and partners with a focus on early intervention and early years to improve outcomes for infants, children and young people.
- Continue to use the recommendations from the National Discussion, the Hayward and Withers report and OECD reports to inform further development in relation to inclusion.
- Continue to improve the quality assurance framework to ensure that there is rigour and consistency in approaches to inclusion.

1.14 It was stated that the other local authorities might benefit from the practice and approaches established in Renfrewshire. In particular the “Non-violent Resistance” approach could be shared through the ADES network.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members of the Education and Children’s Services Policy Board are asked to note and celebrate the key strengths and recognise the area for further improvement in the ADES Collaboration report.

3. Background

- 3.1 Collaborative Improvement (CI) is an approach to bring about improvement through shared work involving staff from the Local Authority, Education Scotland (ES) and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES).
- 3.2 Together, the group establishes the focus for the Collaborative Improvement Review and then undertakes activities in the Local Authority that will result in an evaluative summary of identified strengths and areas that may require further focus. All 32 Local Authorities in Scotland participate in this approach and Renfrewshire’s Children’s Services were selected to be involved in June 2023.
- 3.3. The approach to CI was outlined in the joint agreement¹ and is based on the call for a “strengthened” middle in the 2014 OECD report on Scottish Education².
- 3.4 The approach is also intended to address the recommendation in Audit Scotland’s report on education that Councils should work with schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, other policy teams and partners including the third sector to reduce variability in outcomes³.
- 3.5 The successful impact of the CI process is based on a number of key principles which provide support and challenge for improvement:
- The process brings together knowledge from across the country to secure improvement and share good practice. There is effective sharing of what works well at a local authority level.
 - The increased strengthening of the networked learning system across Scotland as a significant number of officers from different local authorities take part as members of the core CI team who engage with the host LA team.
 - The identified area of focus is clearly rooted in the self-evaluation evidence of the local authority and confirmed as appropriate through robust discussion during the initial planning phase with the core CI team.

- Reporting on progress of identified action points is incorporated into existing improvement planning processes, ensuring that all resources remain focussed on maximising improved outcomes for learners.

1. [Education reform - Joint Agreement June 2018](#)
2. [Improving Schools in Scotland - An OECD Perspective](#)
3. [Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education - Audit Scotland 2021](#)

Implications of this report

1. **Financial**
 2. **HR and Organisational Development**
 3. **Council Planning**
 4. **Legal**
None.
 5. **Property/Assets**
None.
 6. **Information Technology**
None.
 7. **Equality and Human Rights**
No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required, prior to implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 8. **Health and Safety**
None.
 9. **Procurement**
None.
 10. **Risk**
None.
 11. **Privacy Impact**
None.
 12. **Cosla Policy Position**
None.
 13. **Climate Risk**
None.
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List of Background Papers

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#)

[The Promise Scotland](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[General Teaching Council Scotland - Professional Standards](#)

[Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004 - notes](#)

[Presumption to provide education in mainstream setting](#)

[Support for Learning: All our Children and all their Potential](#)

Children's Services

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Renfrewshire Council

Children's Services

ADES Collaborative Report

June 2023

Introduction and Background

Collaborative Improvement (CI) is an approach to bring about improvement through shared work involving staff from the Local Authority, Education Scotland (ES) and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES). Together, the members establish the focus for the Collaborative Improvement Review and then undertake activities in the Local Authority that will result in an evaluative summary of where there are identified strengths and areas that may require further focus.

The approach to CI was outlined in the joint agreement¹ and is based on the call for a “strengthened” middle in the 2014 OECD report on Scottish Education². The approach is also intended to address the recommendation in Audit Scotland’s report on education that Councils should work with schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, other policy teams and partners including the third sector to reduce variability in outcomes³.

The successful impact of the CI process is based on a number of key principles which support and challenge for improvement:

- The process brings together knowledge from across the country to secure improvement and share good practice. There is effective sharing of what works well at a local authority level.
- The increased strengthening of the networked learning system across Scotland as a significant number of officers from different local authorities take part as members of the core CI team who engage with the host LA team.
- The identified area of focus is clearly rooted in the self-evaluation evidence of the local authority and confirmed as appropriate through robust discussion during the initial planning phase with the core CI team.
- Reporting on progress of identified action points is incorporated into existing improvement planning processes, ensuring that all resources remain focussed on maximising improved outcomes for learners.

1 [Education reform - Joint Agreement June 2018](#)

2 [Improving Schools in Scotland - An OECD Perspective](#)

3. [Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education - Audit Scotland 2021](#)

All 32 Local Authorities in Scotland participate in this approach and Renfrewshire’s Children’s Services were selected to be involved in June 2023. The ADES/ES model notes that ownership of the CI activity sits within the context of the local authority self-evaluation for self-improvement processes. As such, Renfrewshire Council’s Children’s Services led the design, planning and organisation of the review.

In considering the theme for CI review, the Inclusion Team wanted to better understand readiness and capacity to respond to the challenges and opportunities arising from the lessons learned from the Additional Support Needs review and the subsequent action plan that was created and to specifically consider outcomes for learners with additional support needs. Therefore, planning for the CI activity started in May 2023. 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 and related to existing priorities. The overarching theme for the review was agreed collectively and this was:

“With the number of children with additional support needs increasing, are we future proofing our universal approaches in order to improve outcomes for children and young people,”

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. The universal approaches that were to be part of the review were:

- Flexible Learning Resource (FLR)
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework
- Renfrewshire's Nurturing Relationships Approach (RNRA) / Non-Violent Resistance (NVR)
- Education Scotland National Model - Circle / Renfrewshire's Inclusive Classroom Environments (RICE)
- Integrated Services

Each of these approaches were explored separately through scene setting, document analysis, school visits, focus groups and professional dialogue.

The schools which took part in these visits were identified through discussions with the Educational Psychology Team. The sample was created to ensure that ES/ADES members could see the above approaches in a variety of contexts. The visits involved colleagues from ADES and ES meeting with practitioners, pupils and parents to discuss the impact of the universal approaches on them.

The review took place over two days and on day three colleagues from ADES and ES provided feedback to senior local authority colleagues as part of a professional dialogue session.

Strengths and Next Steps

"We welcomed the open, honest, and transparent discussion throughout the two days with the Renfrewshire core leads, 'early adopters and ELC Heads of Establishment/ school SLT representatives."

ADES member

Through the analysis of the feedback gathered during the collaborative sessions and the subsequent school visits the following themes emerged:

- ethos and culture of inclusion
- messaging, monitoring, and reporting;
- empowering practitioners;
- thinking more flexibly; and
- expanding across the authority

It is recognised that within each theme there were strengths and next steps to continue to invest in professional learning and quality assurance to ensure the universal approaches are embedded consistently across the local authority.

Ethos and Culture of Inclusion

This first theme highlights how Renfrewshire are adapting their services to ensure that children with additional support needs (ASN) can succeed in mainstream education. The CI team viewed this approach as beneficial not only for those with an identified disability or ASN, but for all pupils more broadly. It was noted from the offset, that there is an extensive well-grounded knowledge base of the demographics of the local authority and the children and communities it serves, and the local authority is well resourced in terms of ASN provision. Leadership of ASN centrally is strong with a positive initiative-taking Educational Psychology team who together with schools and early years

establishments are aiming to ensure that all children, young people (CYP), and families are at the heart of all considerations for multi-agency partnerships, processes, and enhanced practice.

As the number of CYP with complex or ASN continues to rise, participants spoke of a need to look at the bigger picture in terms of the impact of covid-19 and the ongoing cost of living crisis. During the strategic day one sessions, it was agreed that a universal approach to inclusion is essential due to how challenging the transition of moving back into school settings has been across the authority. The CI team recognised that the redesign of the corporate strategy is solution focussed and aspirational, leading to a vision that is clear and understood by all. It was also acknowledged that such an approach takes a significant amount of time, investment, and “change in culture and mindset” from all staff to see positive evidence or impact. The approach also requires ensuring that inclusion remains as inclusion and not seclusion, which one strategic group highlighted as potentially more damaging than exclusion entirely.

Examples of how schools and early years establishments apply the approaches such as RNRA, NVR, CIRCLE and RICE in relation to their unique contexts, were discussed in the focus groups by participants. These frameworks involve a universal approach that empowers practitioners to identify what would best suit their establishment, and better allow them to see changes in practice. The discussion groups and subsequent visits illustrated how these universal approaches can also successfully provide targeted support for CYP who need it. For example, participants spoke of specific strategies that they had identified for individual children they worked with, and how these could be developed to support all CYP long-term. Practice shared during this collaborative discussion highlighted the positive impact of the strong leadership of ASN demonstrated by the head teacher colleagues involved in the collaborative along with the skills and commitment of their staff supporting inclusion. It follows that to ensure a strong authority wide approach to inclusion there will be a requirement for all Head Teachers and Senior Leaders to “endorse” and “champion” the models of inclusion at school and early years level.

The GIRFEC refresh and overall inclusion strategy has moved towards a values based/rights-based approach. It was clear from the discussion that the refresh involved significant multi-agency working and has led to successful roll out and implementation of the policy. The approach taken to refresh GIRFEC within the education sector of Children’s Services was described as practitioner-led and this type of approach should continue in this next phase of embedding the approaches in all schools and early year establishments. There were many examples discussed during the focus groups and illustrated through the establishment visits, which demonstrates the impact of the GIRFEC refresh. For example, during the focus groups and visits ES and ADES colleagues met practitioners, parents and pupils who spoke strongly about the importance of the refresh. They spoke about the positive change to the use of language when discussing inclusion, shifting away from negative terms such as “challenging” or “disruptive” behaviour, to positive language that is grounded in the rights of the child and focusses on the strengths and strategies. This positive change allows for any policies or frameworks to be adopted across establishments, and not solely for those with ASN. A shift in language from behaviours to strategies is also ensuring that “solution-oriented conversations” take place, as practitioners move beyond diagnosis to better understand the context and ensure continuum of supports are available for CYP. Significant work has taken place across the authority to ensure this language is used and the quality improvement framework has been adapted to provide a vehicle for rigorous evaluation to ensure consistency of use.

As well as changing to more inclusive language, schools across Renfrewshire have made progress with altering classrooms to ensure they are inclusive learning environments for all CYP. FLR, Circle and RICE have all been particularly helpful for identifying what changes can be made so all pupils feel safe and included and some of the impact of these changes were seen during the school visits. Similar responses were also given within the Circle and RICE focus group, as both approaches

require staff to adapt their own classrooms to suit the environment and needs of the CYP they support. The use of these frameworks are starting to provide a clearer focus for the targeted use of Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) and other school resources which will ultimately improve outcomes for learners.

The GIRFEC refresh was also commended for supporting practitioners by providing a clear direction for these frameworks. By “ensuring that everything procedure-wise follows the GIRFEC framework,” pupils will receive better support throughout their education and this support will be reviewed and adapted regularly to meet the needs of the child as they grow and develop. Applying this alongside both Circle and RICE allows for more continuity to their support, as there is greater predictability for CYP of what the classroom environments will be like. The importance of Relationship approaches was also well understood across services/agencies and practitioners and there were good examples of strong, joined up thinking.

Next steps

- The GIRFEC refresh now needs to be embedded in everyday practice resulting in a reduction in the current levels of exclusion.
- Expand the universal approaches to inclusion into learning, teaching, assessment, and pedagogy to avoid inclusion being narrowly construed as health and wellbeing, relationships, and socio-emotional development. This will involve closer working with the other workstreams within Children’s Services namely Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Children and Families.
- Continue to engage and “ramp up” involvement with the Early Year Sector and partners with a focus on early intervention and early years to achieve the vision.
- Continue to use the recommendations from the National Discussion, the Hayward and Withers report and OECD reports to inform further development in relation to inclusion.
- Non-violent resistance (NVR) training is an approach worth sharing more widely through the ADES network.

Messaging, Monitoring and Reporting

The next theme, ‘Messaging, Monitoring and Reporting,’ relates to the use of consistent messaging across all services, children, and parents, as well as the importance of reliable and valid data that can assess need and impact across the authority. This theme also relates to the quality assurance programme both at central and local level.

Participants across the focus groups spoke of the need for consistent messaging at all levels of staff within all services and localities so that parents and pupils receive the same outcomes and advice no matter who they reach out to. An example of a consistent approach was illustrated through the authority wide roll out of RNRA. The RNRA discussion session and subsequent visits shared examples of how adopting the same principles of nurture and relationships across schools has allowed for a universal approach in speaking with and supporting CYP and their families. By having access to the same planning framework for all settings, means practitioners will apply the same language across sectors:

“At local authority level, everyone in the council needs to buy into this – no matter where parents go, they will receive the same messages and support.”

Children’s Services CI participant

It is recognised by all that these universal practices should not be limited to schools and early years establishments, there needs to be a shared understanding of what these practices look like and feel

for children across Children's Services including Renfrewshire's Health and Social Care Partnership. This will in turn provide a joined-up approach and a greater understanding for parents, and the wider community. It is hoped that within education that an increased awareness of supports available across the community, parents will have conversations with teachers about these approaches can improve wellbeing and support learning. Increased awareness across services will also mean there will be a better communication and joined-up working with children and families and will negate the need for families to have to tell their story numerous times. The newly created Parent Ambassador group will be a good way to improve communication with parents.

With universal practices in place, all sectors are responsible for reporting, monitoring, and providing feedback. With the use of skilful data analysis in areas such as emotional-based school avoidance, the wellbeing census, and attainment, practitioners can better gauge the level of support required in their own establishment as well as the impact. Further, regular monitoring can allow for easier communication between staff, which can be particularly useful for when children move between teachers. Any collection, analysis, and reporting of data however must be consistent:

“Having a clear framework allows for easier monitoring and a clear alignment for support. Does the support need to go further? It also acknowledges that not every child will follow the same path.”

Children's Services CI Participant

Consistent and reliable recording of data will also allow for practitioners to identify clear targets and indicators that meet the needs of their own establishment:

“Action plans around quality improvement methods... schools gather individualised information and analyse their own data – each establishment will have a clear action plan with clear measure indicators.”

Children's Services CI Participant

Moving forward, participants discussed a need to consider the long-term impact of these supports. The current evidence they have available was described as “incremental,” and so it was suggested that short period reviews in which they identify where they would like to be in one year versus three years would be helpful.

Next steps

- Continue to work with all schools and early year centres, parents, pupils and partners to ensure that consistent messages about approaches and expectations of inclusion are shared enabling children and young people to have the best opportunity to thrive regardless of where they attend school.
- Improve how we share the messages of the supports available from and the function of the Educational Psychology Team more widely.
- The quality assurance framework has recently been adapted to ensure that there is rigour and consistency in the roll out of the refreshed GIRFEC policy and practice. This will provide a vehicle to ensure that there is a consistency of approach to inclusion across all sectors. This will also allow for the measuring of the impact of initiatives on individuals, cohorts, whole school/early years centres and across the authority.
- Also, through these enhanced quality assurance procedures there are opportunities to further explore specific schools and early years settings and review how School Improvement Plans, knowledge of local community contexts/ school estates and data are being used effectively together. This will ensure that local authority engagement is targeted towards the right schools to ensure consistency of the universal approaches roll out.

Empowering Practitioners

In all the CI activities, practitioners demonstrated a clear understanding of what and how they would reach Renfrewshire's ambition of fully inclusive schools. There has been a clear approach to the redesign of the corporate strategy which has as a solution-focused aspirational vision. Leaders have tackled and introduced wide scale operational change by establishing a shared and respectful baseline for improvement and enacted change through partnership agreement. They have demonstrated an empowered approach to building capacity within their educational estate, by drawing on peer led and motivated "early adopters" and more recently "parent ambassadors". This demonstrates a genuine feeling of collective ownership of the approach and evidence of organic growth. There is evidence of an active approach of "winning hearts and minds". There are also examples of the good links and relationships with other local authorities and the Regional Improvement Collaborative where challenges are explored, and practice shared through engagement and collaboration.

Within this theme 'empowering practitioners,' participants spoke of the importance of cascading training across all levels and sectors, to ensure practitioners have the responsibility and skillset needed to deliver an inclusive service. A major aspect participants discussed for empowering practitioners was the importance of leadership of all with central support. In the FLR focus group, members discussed how each locality has their own Inclusion Support Officer, and a senior Educational Psychologist. These leaders have been critical for staff to reach out to for support and provide a clear direction for staff on what they should work towards. Although leadership is needed, there was also a notion of collective responsibility shifting from individuals to across localities. For example, the FLR focus group discussed the changes made to the service and how these will allow for greater accountability at all levels. There is real potential that this new approach for allocating resources will enable a "joined-up" and "solution-focussed" approach to meeting the needs of our CYP, where practitioners gather as a team to identify the best support for the child:

"It's making clearer for parents that every decision made for their child was not made by one person – they are made right across the service and importantly includes those who know the child the best."

Children's Services CI Participant

Improving the resource allocation governance is commendable and empowering. It ensures that the people who know the resources best, can better meet the needs of individual children, families and mainstream schools.

It was recognised that there needs to be more empowerment from both the top and at a grassroots level, so that the universal approaches are kept at the forefront of people's minds.

Collaboration between services was also discussed across the focus groups. Within the Integrated Services focus group, participants discussed the links that have been formed between social work and education. For example, teachers have been provided with guidance in specific areas such as parent alcohol and drug abuse, to raise awareness and potentially allow for earlier intervention.

Empowering practitioners requires providing training to staff across settings, to allow for these universal approaches and interventions to move out of bases and into the classroom. Renfrewshire offers access to high quality professional learning for teaching and support staff. For example, in the Circle and RICE focus group, members spoke about the series of training sessions that are provided to staff to help them embed practice. With course accreditation often available, this gives them the confidence to deliver this practice, knowing they have the skillset to do so. Several teachers

who participated in each of the focus groups spoke about how these training opportunities have made them feel more assured in their role:

“...initially [I was] overwhelmed by [my] new Depute Head Teacher role – early adopters has helped [my] confidence with things that are new... I felt confident knowing I knew what I was going to do.”

Children’s Service CI Participant

Professional learning and training opportunities also provides opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice, and how this could be improved:

“It (CIRCLE) allows teachers (especially those who are more experienced) to take a step back and look at how their practice or space could be adapted.”

Children’s Service CI Participant

Although these supports have been beneficial for developing an inclusive environment, members of ADES and ES discussed the potential impact of managing multiple interventions, including how this may affect teacher workload. Practitioners were asked about the impact of managing between RNRA, RICE, and Circle simultaneously, which it felt could lead to confusion amongst staff. Through discussions practitioners shared that it is important to note that these interventions are complimentary and are not contradictory to each other and so they do not become diluted. Indeed, practitioners spoke about how they have been able to work across these interventions so that staff have a wider selection of supports available to fit within their establishment.

Next steps

- Continue to involve early adopters and skilled / committed senior staff in the delivery of professional development for colleagues.
- Ensure that all sectors, with particular reference to the secondary sector, are equally engaged in the implementation of the various approaches.
- Continue to be mindful of the change management process. There are a number of approaches in place or being developed. Continue to reflect on progress towards each development.
- Continue to explore ways to increase leadership (participation) of young people in strategic developments.

Thinking More Flexibly

In the FLR focus group, participants spoke of how this support follows a similar direction to other countries in Europe by changing to a “resource” that can be applied within schools as opposed to a “base” where children are separated from the classroom environment.

The direction of travel in relation to the flexible learning resources is in line with national and international thinking:

- [The Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education | EASNIE \(european-agency.org\)](https://european-agency.org/), and
- [Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education | European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education \(european-agency.org\)](https://european-agency.org/).

These links provide validation of the approach that Renfrewshire is taking, and reassurance that much of what the other European countries are still to consider, is incorporated into the approach and the ambition. The approach taken by Renfrewshire makes better use of specialist knowledge, allows for flexibility in the use of resource and provision, allowing the authority to make better use

of provision to build capacity across the authority and agencies. This is enabling the local authority to meet the needs of CYP more effectively. Previously the resources provided support for specific ASN, which prevented flexibility and due to the locations of the provisions, access was not equitable.

“It is an approach to inclusion which leaders should drive forward with courage and tenacity.”

ADES/ES CI Participant

To deliver universal inclusion, practitioners have had to think flexibly and creatively with the skills and resources they have available to them. This theme captures how the approaches in Renfrewshire have enabled staff to work towards supporting all CYP in an inclusive school/early years environment. Members in the strategic session discussed how in previous years, attitudes and models in schools were too insular. This has required services to come together to develop a new approach where they can be there for CYP at different times in their learning journey. It has also required schools to look within their own context with their school population and environment, to see how this could be changed:

“Everything needs to be adaptable – particularly as children and staff continue to change, which we can see is supported in Renfrewshire through RICE, the assessment framework, etc.”

Children’s Service CI Participant

As children transition, approaches such as RICE have been particularly helpful for ensuring any initial inductions are adapted to meet the needs of those who may need additional support.

Thinking flexibly also requires including children’s voices, to allow them to have a say in their education:

“Involving children in what stage they are at... it’s not about getting children to sit and write in the classroom, but flexibility is the biggest bit for young people just to be involved in the day.”

Children’s Service CI Participant

One example given in another focus group was the use of the Pupil Voice Box – which has helped with identifying any anxieties about transitions to see how these can be linked to their enhanced transition process.

Next Steps

- To enhance the success of the new, more inclusive approach to supporting ASN through the FLR, will require strong leadership at officer level. This needs to support practitioners to establish effective joint planning across the FLR and mainstream placement.
- Through the improved quality assurance framework at authority level, the referral information related to CYP, their needs and the approaches used by the mainstream schools will be continually monitored as this is important data to enable support and challenge in the ‘mainstream sectors. For example, schools which are ‘over referring’ or paying ‘lip service to inclusion, will need support and challenge.

Expanding Across the Authority

The final theme, ‘Expanding Across the Authority,’ covers what members of the CI hope to see moving forwards as these approaches continue to be applied throughout Renfrewshire. While significant progress has been made, they should continue to encourage Head Teachers from all schools to be involved and consider how these could be adapted to further support early years.

Overall, uptake for Renfrewshire's approaches to inclusion have been high across the authority. For example, 98% of schools have now implemented RNRA, and Circle is now available in all establishments. Although the vast majority have taken part in training, not all have done so fully, or have started at different times, leading to some inconsistencies in their progress and development. In the FLR focus group, members discussed the view that some partners, parents and young people have, that some schools are more inclusive than others. This means, for example, that parents make placing requests to schools they believe will have excellent inclusion, which puts a pressure on their systems and the resources they have available. It is hoped however that as the authority wide expectation and roll out of universal approaches continues, inclusion will be viewed as excellent across the authority as all schools and centres will have the tools necessary to provide an inclusive education for all CYP.

Lastly, several focus groups discussed the importance of early years, and that more focus needs to be given to this sector to ensure these approaches are suitable for their practice. In the Circle and RICE focus group, participants suggested that the authority would benefit from a Play Lead to support with the development of play pedagogy. This would help practitioners to identify what inclusive play would look like, as the current approach to play does not always align with this. Further, as some children might not have the communication skills needed for play, they will require more support to eventually move towards free play.

Next steps

- Continue to ensure that the work for inclusion spans infants as well as children and young people – this would include the policy implementations such as the Language policy.
- Continue to shape training and practices with partners to enhance delivery of the inclusion strategy.
- Continue to embed the work of the Inclusion strategy with robust quality assurance to ensure there is greater consistency in approach across the school and early year estate.

Conclusion

Overall, the themes generated from this Improvement Collaborative demonstrate the progress made in Renfrewshire. The roll out of these universal approaches are in the early stages of development however, they have the potential to ensure mainstream education is inclusive for all. Practitioners across services and sectors demonstrated that they have used these approaches to adapt individual plans and classrooms in ways that support all pupils, but particularly for those with ASN or who come from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Better collaboration between services has also allowed practitioners to share good practice and support one another with these approaches. Participants at the event agreed that they must continue to raise awareness of these throughout Renfrewshire to allow for greater consistency and ensure that all CYP benefit.

“Individuals providing support for ASN, had a very clear vision of what needs to be achieved to ensure more impactful inclusion. With support from Senior Leaders and courage to continue this journey, this will make a difference to children, young people and their families.”

ADES CI Participant