

EDUCATION REFORM – REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES

ISSUE: On 15 June 2017, DFM launched “*Education Governance: Next Steps...*”, which set out the Government’s vision for a school and teacher-led education system. Under these reforms, new Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) will ensure the delivery of consistent, high quality support and improvement services from local authorities, Education Scotland and other partners to Scotland’s schools. At a meeting on 21 September 2017 with DFM, Cllr Stephen McCabe COSLA Spokesperson for Children and Young People, agreed to recommend that COSLA Leaders accept the findings of a joint SG/LG Steering Group report on the establishment of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs). COSLA Leaders accepted that report on 29 September 2017 and agreed to the establishment of 6 Improvement Collaborative areas across Scotland, with Regional Improvement Leads appointed in each area by the end of October 2017 and initial improvement plans to be in place by January 2018.

Top Lines

- The design and delivery of Regional Improvement Collaboratives is an excellent example of partnership working between the Scottish Government and Local Government.
- 6 Regional Improvement Collaboratives have been established across Scotland and each will have an initial Regional Improvement Plan and associated workforce plan in place by 30 January 2018.
- As committed to by the Deputy First Minister on 03 October 2017, all 6 new Regional Improvement Leads were identified by the end of October and have begun working to establish each collaborative.
- Regional Improvement Collaboratives will strengthen the support that our schools and education professionals receive to close the attainment gap.
- They will bring together and through collaboration enhance local authority, Education Scotland and other expertise, to ensure that schools across Scotland receive consistent, responsive and high quality improvement support which has a positive impact on children’s learning.

Regional Improvement Collaboratives will reduce inconsistencies and strengthen the support that is provided to our schools

- Pooling education support resources in Regional Improvement Collaboratives will:
 - reduce inconsistencies in the improvement support that schools across Scotland currently access;
 - bring a stronger focus to driving continuous and systematic improvements, including in closing the attainment gap; and will
 - strengthen and support collaborative working, innovation and the sharing of best practice between schools and across our education system.
- RIC partners will work together with shared responsibility and focus for supporting our schools to close the attainment gap and provide excellence and equity for children and young people.

Regional Improvement Collaboratives are progressing in partnership, with pace and purpose

- Regional Improvement Leads were appointed in all 6 collaborative areas by the end of October 2017. Those appointments were made with the agreement of the Chief Executives of all the authorities in the region and the Chief Inspector of Education, acting on behalf of Scottish Ministers.
- All Regional Improvement Leads have been working with their partners in local authorities and schools to develop their first improvement plans by end January 2018.

EDUCATION REFORM – REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES

- Key Education Scotland staff have been identified to provide support and challenge to each RIC area.
- We have agreed guidance with local government and Education Scotland for the initial production of initial Regional Improvement Plans by 30 January 2018, and for the further development of those plans and associated workforce plans.
- This demonstrates our collective commitment with local government and Education Scotland to establish the Collaboratives with pace and purpose and to drive forward their detailed work to ensure that they deliver real benefits for our schools, practitioners and, most importantly, for our children and young people.

We are taking this forward in partnership and will ensure that schools and communities can shape their regional education support offer

- We established a joint Scottish Government/Local Government Steering Group to develop the proposals for the further development of Regional Improvement Collaboratives. That work formed the basis of our agreement with local government for the early establishment of Regional Improvement Collaboratives and for delivery of their first Regional Improvement Plans by January 2018.
- Our agreement with local government places our schools and young people at the centre of these arrangements.
- We will ensure that Regional Improvement Collaboratives deliver on our collective commitment to provide an educational support offer which is tailored to local needs and which supports schools and teachers across Scotland in delivering excellence and equity for our children and young people.

Regional Improvement Collaboratives are a key element in empowering our schools

- The central purpose of our education governance reforms is to create a school and teacher-led system which is centred around the needs of the child.
- Decisions that shape the education of young people will be made in classrooms, schools and establishments, by those working with our young people, their parents and communities.
- Regional Improvement Collaboratives will have a clear focus on enhancing support, expertise and advice to schools across the region.

Local authorities will continue to have a crucial and democratically accountable role to play in the delivery of education

- This includes recruiting and supporting headteachers, providing education support services to our schools, delivering a range of services for children and young people, and in working with regional and other partners in offering the best possible support to our schools, teachers and young people.

EDUCATION REFORM – REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES

REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES – SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q What will Regional Improvement Collaboratives mean for schools, headteachers/teachers and children?

Regional Improvement Collaboratives will pool, focus and strengthen local authority, Education Scotland and other resources within regions, in order to enhance the improvement support that schools and education professionals can access.

When coupled with the new powers for Headteachers set out in the Headteachers Charter, support provided through Regional Improvement Collaboratives – which will include both subject and sector support, drawing on expertise from across the region and, where required, from beyond - will help our schools and education professionals in closing the attainment gap and in delivering the best possible learning experience for all of our children and young people.

Regional Improvement Collaboratives will also provide a practical collaborative framework to facilitate the sharing of best practice and innovation across our education system, to support school to school and peer level collaboration between our education professionals, and to maximise professional learning opportunities for teaching staff.

Regional Improvement Collaboratives will also be tasked to ensure that the improvement offer in each region is shaped by local priorities. This will ensure that regional planning and the allocation of resources and specialist support is driven by the needs of children and young people in the area.

Q How many Regional Improvement Collaboratives will there be and where will they be based?

As agreed with local government, 6 regional improvement collaborative areas are being established (see table above). They are:

- The Forth Valley & West Lothian Collaborative;
- The Northern Alliance;
- The South East Alliance;
- The South West Collaborative;
- The Tayside Collaborative; and
- The West Partnership.

Q How will Regional Improvement Collaboratives be resourced and is any additional cost justified?

Regional Improvement Collaboratives represent a new, collective way of working and are not new bodies or employing authorities. They will be resourced by pooling existing local government resource and developing Education Scotland staff time and expertise.

Any additional resource would be considered as part of the normal budgetary processes. That would include ensuring that any additional funding or support was justified, would have a positive impact on improving the educational support to schools, and would be reviewed to ensure that any additional resource provided was used effectively.

Q Do Regional Improvement Collaboratives represent a centralisation of education and a diminished role for local authorities?

No – Regional Improvement Collaboratives are not statutory bodies but are instead a framework to strengthen the support that local authorities, Education Scotland and other agencies currently provide to our schools. Their work will be shaped by local priorities, to ensure that the additionality and cross-area expertise secured through enhanced partnership working is focussed on supporting our schools and education staff in making a difference in the classroom.

Local authorities will continue to have a democratically accountable role to play in the delivery of education. This includes: recruiting and supporting headteachers and employing school staff; providing a range of education support services to our schools; delivering wider support services for children, young people and their families; and in working with other councils and partners within Regional Improvement Collaboratives, to ensure a collective focus and responsibility for providing schools across the region with the improvement and collaborative support, expertise and advice that they need to make a difference in the classroom.

EDUCATION REFORM – REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES

Q How will any disputes between local authorities and their Regional Improvement Collaborative be resolved?

Firstly, the appointment of Regional Improvement Leads from within the region and reporting jointly to that Region's Councils and to the Chief Inspector of Education Scotland, will provide coherence between local, regional and national planning. They will also ensure that the work of each Collaborative is shaped by local priorities and that regional resources are deployed to best effect to meet those needs.

We will continue to work with local government and other partners in taking forward the detailed development of the Regional Improvement Collaboratives.

Q How will we ensure that Regional Collaboratives do not create unnecessary bureaucracy?

We have made clear our commitment to reducing unnecessary bureaucracy. That principle will apply to the establishment and operation of regional improvement collaboratives.

To ensure that these changes do not result in unnecessary bureaucracy or additional layers, we will work with partners to ensure that local authority and Education Scotland staff working with school and other authorities are doing so as part of – and within the context agreed by – the Regional Improvement Collaborative. This will ensure that responsive, local engagement will not only continue to take place, but will also be supported by the wider resources and priorities of the Region.

Our consultation document also sets out our intention to remove the requirement for local authorities to submit their own improvement plans, but to contribute instead to their Regional Improvement Plan. That will reduce duplication and support a collective vision and focus on improvement activity across the Region.

Q How will you ensure that schools have clarity and are involved in shaping their regional support offer?

As set out in the Bill consultation documents, the Collaboratives are now being established and will start actively to involve headteachers locally, helping them to understand how they can inform and access this new offer of improvement and curricular support. Much will rest on the relationships that the Regional Improvement Collaboratives establish with headteachers, and the extent to which headteachers are involved in setting the priorities of the Collaborative. The Bill will ensure this involvement.

Regional Improvement Plans will be expected to reflect the school improvement plans in that region.

The need to provide clarity to Headteachers on what support and guidance is being provided through the collaborative, what is being provided by their individual local authority, and where to go for specialist advice will be a key element in the development of each Collaborative.

Q How will regional leads be employed?

The Regional Improvement Lead will be employed by one of the authorities in the Region, and formally line managed by the Chief Executive of that authority, whilst reporting to all of the collaborating authorities in the Region and to the Chief Inspector of Education Scotland.

Q What support will be provided to Regional Improvement Leads?

It will be for each Collaborative to ensure they secure the best possible mix of staffing to enable them to deliver with ambition and pace. We will work with each of the developing Collaboratives in ensuring that their model of staff deployment delivers on the core functions and agreed priorities.

Q How will RICs demonstrate the impact they are having and ensure they do not simply duplicate existing activity?

In developing their regional priorities for improvement and approaches to address them, Regional Improvement Collaboratives will work with practitioners and will draw on existing school, local authority and NIF plans to ensure that they enhance the support that is provided to our schools and early years establishments.

EDUCATION REFORM – REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES

We will work with Regional Improvement Leads and other partners, including Education Scotland, to ensure that the Regional Improvement Plans and associated work plans address inconsistencies in and deliver additionality to our schools and practitioners.

We will also commission an independent review of the establishment and initial operation of regional Improvement Collaboratives in April 2018, with a further review some 12-18 months thereafter.

Q How do we ensure that cross-regional and national collaboration continues where appropriate?

We will work with the Regional Improvement Leads in ensuring coherence in areas where activity should continue across multiple Collaborative areas, including nationally. This may for example include developing joint approaches with regards to advice and support on Gaelic Medium Education, and with regards to engagement with and across sectors.

Q How do we ensure that the restructure of ES with relation to the RICs does not diminish the existing work of ES, including with regard to the wider DYW agenda?

We will work with Education Scotland and other partners to ensure that the regional deployment of Education Scotland staff strengthens and enhances the current educational support that they provide.

Q How will wider stakeholders (including teachers, parents and young people) be consulted in this matter?

The consideration of wider stakeholder views – including those of parents and young people – will be among the criteria used to judge the appropriateness of each Regional Improvement Plan. Ensuring robust and regular engagement with stakeholders will therefore be a key element in the early and ongoing work of each and every Collaborative.

Q How will the RIC planning timetable fit in with the expectations already on heads and LAs under the NIF?

We have set out our intention to remove the requirement for local authorities to submit their own improvement plans, but to contribute instead to the development and delivery of their Regional Improvement Plan. We will also work with the Collaboratives and with schools to ensure that regional planning is responsive to local needs and circumstances.

Regional Improvement Plans will also give consideration to priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF), to ensure that there is coherence between local, regional and national planning.