North Lanarkshire Council
Report

Education and Families Committee

☒approval ☒noting   **Ref**   DB/AM   **Date**   17/09/19

Innovation and Improvement Hub

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Executive Summary

This report presents elected members with a plan for a new Innovation and Improvement Hub which will build upon the success of initial research conducted within North Lanarkshire's Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) programme.

North Lanarkshire's Innovation and Improvement Hub will provide a research framework using a mix of research methods, approaches and tools, supporting and empowering practitioners and leaders across the service to engage with evidence informed practice and assess what will make a difference in their own context.

The report proposes a scoping exercise to explore the most effective way to build and pilot the Innovation and Improvement Hub, with a view to launching the Hub for August 2020. This proposed scoping exercise will be in line with the DigitalNL transformation programme.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Education and Families Committee:

     (1)   Note the contents of this report
     (2)   Approve the plan for developing the Innovation and Improvement Hub.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority   Support all children and young people to realise their full potential

Ambition statement   (6) Raise attainment and skills for learning, life, and work to enhance opportunities and choices

1. Background

1.1 The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education and the 2015 review by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) recommended the development of a more coherent approach to using research and data across the system, in order to drive improvement.

1.2 The research knowledge gained through North Lanarkshire's Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) has identified best practice, helped raise attainment and narrowed the poverty-related attainment gap within the thirty five Keys to Success schools.

1.3 *"While we know that the relationships between poverty and attainment are complex, we must make every effort to identify what has the most impact in bringing change".* (Scottish Government, a Research Strategy for Scottish Education, 2017. Page 10)

The evidence-informed research approaches used in SAC and the Children and Young People improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) have supported greater connectivity, improvement and collaboration across establishments and promoted inter-authority working.

1.4 This approach is underpinned by a continuing use of data and an improving culture of professional collaboration which is becoming embedded across the service. The Innovation and Improvement Hub will promote this further, by providing a research framework using a mix of research methods, approaches and tools.

1.5 The role of robust, credible research which can challenge the system is vital in ensuring that Education and Families works effectively, and is well-positioned to tackle the challenges of the future.

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2. Report

2.1.1 To deliver our Ambition we need to integrate all of our resources and expertise to design services around the needs of children and families. That means finding new ways of working that position Education and Families services alongside the work of our partners. A greater focus on working smarter, enabling collaboration and innovation will help us to shift the balance towards a much greater focus on the development of local approaches that make a difference to the life chances of all children, young people and families, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

2.1.2 The Innovation and Improvement Hub will provide universal, additional and intensive offers for practitioners and leaders at all levels of the system. The development is being taken forward as an integration model across Education and Families and will build on the work currently being progressed by Talent and Organisational Development (TOD) with Social Work colleagues to create an e-space Knowledge Hub for policies, procedures, practice guidance and frameworks for assessment and planning. A strategy group will be established to take forward the integration of the Knowledge Hub into the development of the more extensive Innovation and Improvement Hub.

2.2 Universal Offer

2.2.1 In keeping with the approach across Education and Families including universal, additional and intensive supports, the following draft diagram depicts a similar approach to the Innovation and Improvement Hub.

Accreditation
Intensive Offers

Building Capacity through
Professional Learning
Additional Offers

Innovation and Improvement Hub
Universal Offers

2.2.2 The Innovation and Improvement Hub will be a digital cloud based site which can be accessed by all Education and Families practitioners and will provide a universal offer to support colleagues to develop innovative and robust practice. This interactive online platform will provide an opportunity for practitioners to share, discuss and review practitioner produced research and enquiry.

2.2.3 Research and literature reviews based around key interventions and themes will be available to colleagues across Education & Families. This will lead to more appropriate selection of interventions, improved outcomes for children and families and better use of finances. This will impact on all areas of improvement work, including Pupil Equity Funding.

2.2.4 In line with recommendations from the National Research Strategy (2017), leaders at all levels within Education and Families will have the opportunity to use the Hub to enable them to develop strategies to collaborate with their staff, partners, parents, children and young people to identify patterns and outcomes within their establishments, to design and implement appropriate interventions and to monitor impact to learn lessons for improvement.

2.2.5 This approach will require the Microsoft 365 infrastructure to be in place to enable it. A range of models will be scoped out and will be explored with stakeholders from across the service as part of an options appraisal. Through engagement with the DigitalNL team, and the planned scoping session, we will identify what digital developments are either already underway, in planning, or available to us through the DigitalNL programme to achieve our goals. This will also enable us to leverage expertise, existing resources and maximise available funding.

2.3 Additional Offer

2.3.1 Studies have shown that access to research will not in itself lead to improvement. Leaders at all levels of the system require to have a continuing commitment to learn about how research and data are being used and to act on implications. Therefore training and support for practitioners will be key aspects of additional offers of support provided by the Innovation and Improvement Hub.

2.3.2 Strategies to build capacity of leaders at all levels will be available through integrated professional learning opportunities in conducting research and measuring impact, using recognised and robust research methods including Collaborative Action Research (CAR), Improvement Science Methodology and Critical Collaborative Enquiry. These training opportunities will be highlighted through the Hub, and provided as part of the Service's Leadership Framework.

2.3.3 Establishments and clusters will also have the offer of support in developing joint initiatives to promote greater collaboration and innovative working across and beyond the Service, and will be helped to establish mechanisms for measuring success. This may include supporting and enhancing approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning.

2.3.4 It is anticipated that through strengthening and building capacity in evaluation through research, establishments and clusters will be able to identify trends within their settings. This will enable them to design and deploy the most effective interventions and monitor and verify interventions which are successful in their local context. The Innovation and Improvement Hub will provide all practitioners with a mechanism to share the development of innovative pedagogies and research methodologies and will highlight the impact of lessons for improvement across the system.

2.3.5 This work reflects emerging thinking from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Policy Unit in relation to the most effective strategies to maximise progress in closing the attainment gap.

These strategies include *"continuing to strengthen practitioner engagement with research, collaborative enquiry and use of other evidence to underpin decisions about improving practice and reviewing improvement priorities."* and "*ensuring that every school has access to relevant high quality professional learning and a network of support to develop data literacy skills."*
Scottish Attainment Challenge – Maximising Impact to 2021, Scottish Government Learning Directorate (September 2019)

2.4 Intensive Offer

2.4.1 A more intensive offer of support will be available to practitioners and establishments encouraging them to undertake research leading to accreditation through collaborative research, academic fellowships, masters-level learning and potentially doctoral study.

2.4.2 Colleagues will be given the opportunity to share research findings based on key themes and, subject to scrutiny, have their work published on the Hub and shared through seminars. This could take the form of practitioner enquiry, dissertation and thesis.

2.4.3 Examples of excellent practice of accredited and published evidence-informed research from within North Lanarkshire are available. These include:

- The Cognitively Guided Instruction Project, involving St. Stephen's Primary School which evidenced *'statistically significant rise in numeracy attainment for primary school pupils'* (University of Strathclyde, Scottish Attainment Challenge, Cognitively Guided Instruction Project: 2016 – 2018, 2018. Page 67)
- The work undertaken in Keys to Success schools on nurture, which highlighted the benefits of enhancing nurturing approaches in primary schools. This work was published in The International Journal of Nurture in Education, Volume 4 June 2018
- The evaluation into the use of structured deferred sentence in a pilot project at Hamilton Sheriff Court. This study, which was carried out alongside partners from South Lanarkshire Council and Community Justice Scotland found positive outcomes for young people made subject to structured deferred sentences compared to those on community payback orders. This was presented to the National Youth Justice Conference in June 2019

2.5 Next steps

2.5.1 The next steps in the delivery plan will be to develop a work plan for scoping the development of the Innovation and Improvement Hub and engage in an options appraisal with key stakeholders. It is intended to bring a further report on this scoping exercise and options appraisal to a future committee.

2.5.2 It is anticipated that implementation of the Hub will be phased, and the DigitalNL transformation programme team and the People and Organisational Development team will work with Education and Families to ensure that plans are aligned to ensure successful delivery of the operating model.

2.5.3 An Ethics Board of practitioners, officers and partners from the academic world will be established to ensure that all research protocols have been followed and that the work of the Hub is coherent with its principles. This work with be overseen by a newly appointed Scottish Attainment Challenge Lead Officer.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

Work to build capacity in practitioners and leaders through the Innovation and Improvement Hub reflects the aim of the National Improvement Framework to ensure excellence and equity and supports the recommendations of the Fairness Commission and the Fairer Scotland Duty to reduce the inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

The Innovation and Improvement Hub is designed to increase opportunities for all practitioners across the service to engage with evidence-informed practice and research design and assess what will make a difference in their own context in order to improve outcomes for all children and young people. Equality impact assessments will be undertaken in line with Council policy.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

The scoping exercise and development of the work plan will be part of the duties of staff supported through the SAC Programme 'Leadership Framework'. There are a number of actions and developments to be progressed within the 'Leadership Framework' area of work which has total funding of £93,000. As highlighted in 2.5.1 a future report to committee will identify the costs and funding of establishing a sustainable Hub.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

There are no HR issues at this point.

4.3 Environmental Impact

Increased use of digital technologies through the development of an interactive Innovation and Improvement Hub will have a positive environmental impact in relation to reducing the production and printing of learning resources and associated travel required to attend professional learning events.

4.4 Risk Impact

Greater investment in continuing to improve professional practice at all levels will enable us to manage reputational risk. Our approach supports us to deliver against our commitment to provide high quality, accessible, responsive and personalised services for all young people and service users.

5. Measures of success

5.1 The development and successful implementation of the Innovation and Improvement Hub

5.2 Practitioners across the service will have increased awareness and confidence in using evidence-informed improvement approaches.

5.3 There will be increased collaboration across services in relation to improvement work and higher numbers of practitioners will be engaged in research and professional learning opportunities.

5.4 A more extensive evidence base of verified intervention approaches will be available which make a difference to the life chances of all children and families in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5.5 Improved outcomes for children, young people and families and increased attainment and reduction in the poverty related attainment gap.

6. Supporting documents

6.1   A Research Strategy for Scottish Education. April 2017

https://www.gov.scot/publications/research-strategy-scottish-education

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