

Education Governance and Regional Collaboration

Strategic Development

This paper provides an update on the ongoing work to find a consensus position on Education Governance and Regional Collaboration with Scottish Government following the publication of their “Next Steps” document in June 2017. The paper invites Board Members to consider a Local Government proposal and to provide feedback on this proposal for the COSLA Leaders meeting on 29 September.

Summary and Recommendations

Following the publication of the Scottish Government’s “Next Steps” document in June 2017, the COSLA Spokesperson and officers have been working with colleagues across local government to develop the Local Government offer on regional collaboration. The report provides a suggested Local Government approach to delivering the policy direction of the “Next Steps” document and sets out the work undertaken so far at officer level.

CYP Board Members are invited to:

- i. Note that Cllr McCabe and the Deputy First Minister agreed to establish an officer working group to consider how to take forward the Next Steps document and this group will provide a report on their findings by mid-September 2017;
- ii. Consider and provide feedback on the Local Government proposal to deliver the policy intent of the Next Steps document whilst maintaining local accountability for children and families, as set out in paras 9 to 24; and
- iii. Note that this proposal and the feedback from the Board will be considered by the COSLA Leaders meeting on 29 September 2017.

References

Previous reports on Education Governance:

- COSLA Leaders 25/08/17 – Education Governance and Regional Collaboration
- COSLA Leaders 30/06/17 – Education Governance
- COSLA Leaders 26/05/17 – Education Governance and Regional Collaboration
- COSLA Leaders 24/02/17 – Education Governance
- COSLA Leaders 13/12/16 – Education Governance Consultation Response
- COSLA Leaders, 25/11/16 – Regional Collaboration
- ECYP Executive Group, 11/11/16 – Education Governance Review

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Strategic Development

1. Education is a key policy priority area of the Scottish Government. The Education Delivery Plan¹ set out the high-level direction in June 2016, followed by formal consultation on Education Governance² which closed in January 2017.
2. COSLA's response to this consultation³ was in line with stakeholders across the system in outlining our key concerns:
 - The attainment gap cannot be solved in the classroom alone. The focus of the Governance Review was too narrowly on classroom-based education which is not in line with GIRFEC or integrated children's services.
 - It is not necessary to change governance structures to bring about improvements in education.
3. The announcement of *Education Governance Next Steps*⁴ was accompanied by publication of the Scottish Government's analysis of the consultation responses⁵. Both acknowledged the weight of responses which had argued against change, but made clear the Government's intention to progress. These documents were also accompanied by a consultation on funding – *Fair Funding*.⁶

Current COSLA Position

4. Improvement in Education and Children's Services is a priority for Local Government and we are committed to the improvement agenda. We recognise that meaningful collaboration will support continuous improvement across all local authority areas.
5. Councillor McCabe met with the Deputy First Minister in his capacity as Spokesperson on the 24th July 2017. Cllr McCabe provided a summary of the concerns felt within local government and our partners and the Deputy First Minister agreed that a Scottish Government/Local Government officer group could consider the areas of concern with a view to providing clarity as well as an opportunity for COSLA to shape the policy as it progresses. Cllr McCabe and the DFM agreed that the officer group should provide a report by 8th September 2017.
6. The initial work of the officer group is focusing on regional collaboration but there is clear agreement that the officer group will then move to consider the other elements contained within the "Next Steps" document.
7. The working group spent some time agreeing a forward process of working and the guiding principles. The group agreed that the principles should be wider in scope than merely school based education, with GIRFEC at the core. The more "difficult" discussions around functions and accountability were delayed until late in August which led to a sense of frustration within the local government officer group. However, the group have worked since then on a document which outlines the policy intent behind the

¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00502222.pdf>

² <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00505460.pdf>

³ <http://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/private/coslarestonetoeducationgovernanceconsultationdecember2016.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521038.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521034.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521081.pdf>

Scottish Government's "Next Steps" document and which outlines the Local Government approach to providing a sustainable, whole system approach to delivering this policy intent with GIRFEC at the heart of the proposal and the maintenance of the link with local democratic accountability.

8. COSLA Leaders considered this matter on 25 August, 2017 and agreed that the high level principle behind the Local Government proposal was sound and that a more detailed report would be brought forwards for the meeting on 29 September 2017. Board members are asked to consider the proposed COSLA position, outlined in the paragraphs below and provide feedback for Leaders to consider.

Proposed COSLA position

Guiding Principles

9. These guiding principles were proposed by the officer working group and would frame the work of the Regional Collaboratives as they emerge and develop and help 'operationalise' the policy intentions as set out in the 'Next Steps' document.
 - Outcome-focused – the primary purpose for RICs is to support the delivery of educational improvement, developing and maintaining a coherent focus on raising attainment and closing the attainment gap, whilst ensuring that activity is aligned to the National Improvement Framework (NIF).
 - Child-centred - improvement must reflect the principles of GIRFEC and take a holistic approach to the needs of the child. RICs must consider the 'whole system' and ensure that all partners are working across authority boundaries and that they are engaging with those working closest to children, and with children themselves, at the point of need, as and when required.
 - A thematic approach – in order to ensure function comes before structure, RICs must establish clarity of purpose and common goals, drawing on the NIF and contributions of all partners. The focus should be on building collective expertise, knowledge and capacity to drive continuous improvement.
 - Robust, locally-driven and evidence-based priorities – must be driven by the needs and priorities identified within the region, whilst reflecting national priorities and local and national evidence. Where appropriate, RICs will also draw on the activity and experience of existing regional groupings and their work to date. Evaluation must be built in from the outset.
 - Agile and flexible – each RIC must build the capacity of the 'system' in order to respond to specific needs, and to react to change and unexpected events. They should actively encourage innovation and seek opportunities for partnership working. Sharing best practice within and beyond their RIC will be essential.
 - Empowering – it will be important for RICs to create an environment based on trust and open dialogue, working with partners to ensure that progress can be made at pace, and that any ambiguities or tensions can be surfaced and resolved through collective effort. A 'culture of collaboration' will need to develop at all levels across the 'education community', whilst ensuring collective support to the role and responsibilities of headteachers in securing improvement in the classroom and beyond.

Functions

10. Functions will flow from high level aims and nationally identified priorities and will vary in practice depending on local need. Collaboratives will take an evidence-based approach to determine how to structure their function to best support gaps locally.

Geography

11. Each local authority in Scotland will belong to a collaborative grouping based on local assessment of where the most meaningful work can be undertaken on a partnership basis. Those geographies are noted below:

The Northern Alliance	Aberdeen City Council Aberdeenshire Council Argyll and Bute Council Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Highland Council Moray Council Orkney Islands Council Shetland Islands Council
The Tayside Collaborative	Angus Council Dundee City Council Perth and Kinross Council
The West Partnership	East Dunbartonshire Council East Renfrewshire Council Glasgow City Council Inverclyde Council North Lanarkshire Council Renfrewshire Council South Lanarkshire Council West Dunbartonshire Council
South West Collaborative	East Ayrshire Council North Ayrshire Council South Ayrshire Council Dumfries and Galloway Council
South East Collaborative	Edinburgh City Council East Lothian Council Fife Council Midlothian Council Scottish Borders
Forth and Almond Valley Collaborative	Clackmannanshire Council Falkirk Council Stirling Council West Lothian Council

Governance and Accountability

12. The formal accountability for education and performance will remain with individual local authorities in line with statutory duties and their respective Governance arrangements. This will ensure links with other supporting services are maintained and the community planning partners continue to be responsible for playing a role in the improvement of attainment and importantly in narrowing the attainment gap. Accountability as discussed below relates wholly to regional collaboration and does not compromise but may compliment the legislative accountabilities of local authorities. Individual officers within local authorities will continue to be responsible to their local authority and will continue to

operate within the local governance and accountability frameworks of their local authority – reporting to the Chief Executive of their Council and to local elected members.

13. The strategic leads responsible for education and children's services within the local authorities forming the collaborative will together form 'the Collaborative'. The Collaborative may elect to bring in other partners – for example a representative of NHS from a local Board. It is expected Education Scotland will play a role in each of the RICs and will allocate resources as appropriate.
14. A Regional Coordinator or Lead Officer will be appointed from among the existing Chief Education Officers/Heads of Service/Directors forming the collaborative by the agreed governance body for that geographical area. For example, Glasgow City Region Cabinet. The Regional Coordinator will lead the development and implementation of the regional improvement plan working with staff of the participating local authorities. The Regional Co-ordinator will chair meetings of the collaborative and will act as a liaison for Chief Executives and Elected Members of collaborating authorities, as well as other parties including the Scottish Government and Education Scotland.
15. The Regional Coordinator will continue to be line-managed by the Chief Executive or relevant officer of the employing authority. They will report on the progress of the Collaborative against the agreed plan to the Chief Executives and Education Conveners or equivalent of the collaborating authorities, as well as the Chief Executive of Education Scotland.
16. In addition, as a collective, the Collaborative will be accountable to their collective Chief Executives and to Education Conveners who would form a constituted panel of elected members who lead on education and children's services across the geography of the collaboration, as well as to their collective Council Leaders. Together, this system-wide structure will share collective responsibility for ambition, vision, strategy and delivery.
17. Each Director/Head of Service/Chief Education Officer will continue to report to their current Education Committee or equivalent and Chief Executive, as appropriate to local governance and reporting arrangements.
18. Other partners contributing to the Collaborative will continue to operate within their own accountability structure.
19. With the agreement of the Collaborative, a Regional Coordinator may lead work across participating local authorities. While staff from across local authorities may contribute to cross-boundary work, this will not impact on the line of accountability which those staff have within their own local authority. Where staff undertake work directly for the Collaborative – either on a secondment or an employment basis – accountability will be considered on a case by case basis.

Reporting

20. The Collaborative will be responsible for using evidence to set out local collaboration priorities on a regularly-agreed basis. The analysis and use of evidence will be supported by Education Scotland and the Scottish Government.
21. At a minimum, an annual Collaborative report on performance will be presented to the agreed structure of elected members, and at the same time to the Chief Executive of Education Scotland and to the relevant Scottish Government Minister. Reports will be in line with requirements of the wider children's services system – the National Improvement Framework and local integrated children's service planning.

Capacity/Resources

22. Each Collaborative will ensure they have the capacity and resources (staffing and budget) in place, derived and deployed in the way they choose, to achieve their ambitions and priorities. This will require additional grant funding.

Communication

23. Each Collaborative will have a clear communications plan which identifies the range of bodies and stakeholders involved in the delivery of children's services locally and the most appropriate means of engagement with them. Stakeholders and agencies may include departments within local authorities, the third sector, the NHS, headteachers, teachers, support workers, parents and young people.

24. Staff, stakeholders and young people, will be engaged, involved and aware of how the Collaboratives are working towards their key aims. Communication will engender system-wide ownership.

Next steps

25. Cllr McCabe has a meeting with the Deputy First Minister later in September and will be seeking his views on the Local Government proposal. The COSLA Leaders meeting on 29 September will consider this proposal, the feedback from the Deputy First Minister and the views of the Children and Young People Board to this paper in order to agree their final position.

Summary and recommendations

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