

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE30 SEPTEMBER 2021Report by Director of EducationPROGRESS REPORT ON PRIORITIES ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL
IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK**PURPOSE**

1. The purpose of the report is to update elected members on the Education Department's progress implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education (NIF).

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the Education Department's progress in implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework

BACKGROUND

3. On 6 January 2016 the Scottish Government launched the National Improvement Framework (NIF) for Scottish education. The Framework is intended to drive both excellence and equity in Scottish education and is reviewed annually. The 2021 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan was published in December 2020.

4. The NIF is underpinned by a series of planning and reporting duties designed to support transparency and accountability around the efforts of the Scottish Government and education authorities to improve educational outcomes and support system wide improvement. These legal duties have been integrated into the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 through Part 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

5. The priorities set out in the NIF mirror our own aspirations set out in our Community Plan and Fairer East Ren Plan, West Partnership Plan, Local Improvement Plan and Education Department vision of "Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences".

6. Elected members will be aware of the department's strategy, Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education in East Renfrewshire. The strategy is designed to tackle inequity and inequalities in educational outcomes and places an emphasis on curriculum, teaching and life-long learning along with putting the needs and circumstances of the individual learner at the centre.

7. The annual Standards and Quality Report provides evidence of how the department and schools have raised the bar for all learners and at the same time

reduced the inequalities of outcome experienced by our more disadvantaged children and young people. The report also sets out the progress we have made towards the four national priorities as set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF):

- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people

8. Given the context this year, local authorities were not required to report to the Scottish Government on themes detailed above in paragraph 7. However, high level, evidence based, internal quality assurance by both our schools and the department has allowed us to report on the continuous improvement in East Renfrewshire and evaluate the impact of our commitment to supporting children, families and school communities throughout the Covid-19 crisis

REPORT

9. The department evaluates its progress annually to identify strengths in current provision and areas where further improvement is required. Evidence gathered from the self-evaluation and evaluations of services and schools by the department's Quality Improvement Team, Education Scotland, Care Inspectorate and Customer Service Excellence is used to identify steps which need to be taken to secure continuous improvement.

10. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, evidence for the report was limited to the following sources:

- performance and questionnaire data;
- thematic reviews by Education Scotland and the Quality Improvement Team on remote learning;
- reports on Early Learning and Childcare Centres by Care Inspectorate Scotland; and,
- school and service improvement plans and Standards and Quality Reports.

11. Education Department guidance on improving quality of provision has been refreshed annually since 2016-17 to reflect the NIF and associated Improvement Plan. Links to the NIF priorities and drivers have been incorporated into the Local Improvement Plan since 2017. As a result, all Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) establishments' and schools' improvement plans reflect the 4 national priorities as set out in the NIF and detailed in paragraph 7.

Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy

12. Quality assurance and moderation remain a key focus of the National Improvement Framework Agenda. Over the past 8 school sessions, the authority has had a significant focus on developing a shared understanding of standards through a range of moderation activity and professional learning opportunities across all sectors. This has been essential in supporting schools in identifying interventions best placed to have the biggest impact on improving literacy and numeracy. In response to Covid-

19 we adapted our framework and approaches in order to continue to support establishments and practitioners in relation to learning, teaching and assessment.

13. All establishments have 'moderation facilitators' who have participated in focused professional learning and are able to lead developments at school, cluster and local authority levels. When surveyed 99% of responses from Moderation Facilitators indicated that they felt equipped to take forward moderation within their establishments and 94% of responses indicated that their confidence in the process of moderation had improved. This has further confirmed that the internal arrangements in our schools are supporting accuracy of teacher judgements of pupil's performance.

14. A range of professional learning opportunities were developed and delivered to staff across sectors. The programme of Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) offered was highly evaluated. The qualitative comments received indicate a continued appetite for professional learning on the various aspects of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle/process. Staff noted that more cross sector moderation would be helpful and that a key focus should remain on transitions and progression across levels throughout the Broad General Education (BGE).

15. Last school session assessment and moderation activity for secondary practitioners centred around the Alternative Certification Model, providing excellent opportunities for practitioners to engage in ongoing high quality dialogue linked to effective assessment approaches. Through these opportunities, staff are continuing to develop their confidence in making accurate professional judgements about learners' progress.

16. The Local Assessment Resource has been overhauled, redesigned and relaunched last session and contains sections aimed at supporting moderation activity for all senior leaders and practitioners across all sectors. There are links to relevant national documentation from Education Scotland, webinar recordings of the professional learning programme delivered from October to December 2020 and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework 'Excellent Experiences for All'. It also contains high quality materials from previous local authority moderation activities.

Literacy

17. Despite the restrictions the actions identified in East Renfrewshire's Literacy Strategy have continued to be progressed. With a focus on ensuring that literacy development has not been impacted by school closures, the Literacy Team have continued to collaborate with school staff to ensure that literacy needs are identified and supported.

18. Where possible, Reading Recovery was delivered in primary schools to identified individual children. Schools have indicated through their self-evaluation processes that the children participating in Reading Recovery are transferring their skills to the class setting and practitioners are noting improvements across literacy and English.

19. In response to school closures and potential learning loss, further programmes to address the wider groups of children (Daily Literacy Learning and Together Raising Attainment in Literacy) were introduced in some schools to support learning in relation to literacy.

20. Daily Literacy Learning (DLL) is a whole class approach to teaching reading and writing with a focus on oral language development. 124 Primary 2 pupils across 4

schools participated in the programme. 84% of pupils were non-readers or were reading at emergent literacy levels before participating in DLL and 48% of pupils were reading above expected levels after participating in the programme. Despite this improvement, a few young people still require additional support to mitigate against the time they have not been at school.

21. The ongoing English and Literacy staff CLPL programme continued during 2020-21. Training for Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) in ERC's Together Better Readers has again provided a framework for PSAs to support the reading of older children in primary and young people in secondary. Further training for Supporting Reading in the Classroom has also been developed and delivered.

22. In response to data from schools regarding the lack of social interaction between some children and young people during school closures and the vocabulary gap the Quality Improvement Officer with responsibility for English and Literacy, along with the departmental Principal Teachers of Literacy have developed Talking and Listening guidance and a programme of CLPL for school staff. This will be launched during session 2021-2022.

23. The virtual Literacy Locker has been created to support staff and stores all relevant materials for the development of literacy. Within the Literacy Locker, videos which can be used for staff development ensure that training can take place at times convenient to schools and practitioners. Similarly, the Literacy Library has been established for parents including videos for parents on how to support their child's literacy development.

Numeracy

24. In relation to the outcomes set out in the Numeracy and Mathematics Strategy, there was a continued commitment to the provision of high quality professional learning opportunities for staff from all sectors. The range of professional development activities switched to digital and narrowed in order to protect staff time and capacity to adapt to the developing situation (Covid-19). In collaboration with Education Scotland, a small suite of workshops pertinent to our priorities was developed and delivered. These sessions were highly evaluated by attendees.

25. Effective formative assessment was given a high priority to enable staff to identify any potential Numeracy and Mathematics learning loss. Trained Maths Champions across all establishments in the Early Learning & Childcare and Primary sectors participated in a series of workshops, led by Education Scotland. Workshops linked to these key themes and additional network meetings focused on the use of digital technologies to support practitioners in their delivery of this area of the curriculum during periods of remote learning.

26. The West Partnership Maths Group arranged the fourth annual conference for practitioners across the eight local authorities. The conference was held virtually this session due to the restrictions in place at the time. The virtual platform allowed a greater number of participants to attend (approx. 500) and there were a variety of workshops on offer aimed at raising attainment in numeracy and mathematics. Almost all attendees felt the information provided and presentations were useful (97%) and that the sessions they attended would impact upon their practice (94%).

27. During 2020 – 2021, Adult Learning Services transformed the service to meet the needs of local adult learners. The team trained as Digital Champions through

Connecting Scotland and this programme has provided 44 families and individual residents with a digital device, connectivity and ongoing support to engage with learning and services online.

28. 155 adult learners were supported by providing them with a range of tailored learning opportunities enabling them to make progress towards their learning goals and stay connected with their family, friends and local community. Courses included a range of ESOL, Adult Literacies, Learning for Work and Personal Development programmes.

29. The role of link Quality Improvement Officers will continue to be focused on providing ongoing support for self-evaluation and school improvement. Quality Improvement Officers will work alongside school leaders as a 'critical friend' in relation to recovery planning, learning loss, improvement planning and standards and quality reports as we aim to build back better.

Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy

30. In September and October each year, the ability of primary 1 pupils in literacy and numeracy and physical development is measured in a screening process called the literacy and numeracy baseline and developmental milestones screening. This allows primary staff to record children's strengths and areas for development, to plan for learning and target setting and to monitor children's progress over time. Moreover the information is also shared with early learning and childcare establishments to allow them to consider how they may improve experiences and outcomes for children. The data gathered in September and October 2020 (most recent) demonstrated that:

- a) whilst the average raw performance of all children collectively in literacy and numeracy remained relatively unchanged from previous years, this was not the case for those children regarded as being from less affluent backgrounds, as measured by SIMD;
- b) the proportion of all children attaining their developmental milestones decreased by around 3%, again with those from least affluent backgrounds being impacted disproportionately.

31. Each year the Scottish Government gathers Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data from all schools in Scotland which reports the proportion of children who attain the expected levels of progression in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy at the P1, P4, P7 and S3 year stages. As a consequence of the impact from Covid-19, ACEL data was not collected for academic year 2019-20 whilst in 2021 the Scottish Government made the decision not to gather progress levels for those pupils in S3, given the ongoing demands on the secondary sector regarding the alternative certification model for national qualifications. The data collected for East Renfrewshire's schools for academic year 2020-21, whilst already submitted to the Scottish Government, is still to be confirmed and published. At the P1, P4 and P7 year stages in 2020-21, early data shows that:

- a) children's levels of progression in the Broad General Education in 2020-21 remains significantly above the national average in 2018-19 (last year recorded);
- b) in 2020-21 the proportion of children attaining the expected level of progress in reading, writing and numeracy is the lowest recorded since 2016-17, whilst in talking and listening the proportion achieving is the lowest recorded since 2017-18, albeit performance remains high across all curricular areas;

c) the greatest decrease in attainment since 2016-17 is at the P1 year stage.

32. In the absence of the SQA 2021 examinations, school staff and Education Department personnel worked together to deliver, in line with SQA and Scottish Government guidelines, an Alternative Certification Model (ACM). The process was formally shared with Parent Council Chairs along with individual school parent forums ensuring that all learners and parents were kept informed throughout the process. The ACM in East Renfrewshire was evaluated by Education Scotland who commended its rigour and fairness. Whilst the Education Department has its own dataset for analysis of 2020-21 National Qualification outcomes, attainment in wider measures such as literacy and numeracy, school leaver information as well as national and regional performance information is not yet available.

In 2019-20 (most recent available), the proportion of leavers attaining literacy and numeracy combined at SCQF levels 3 and 4 increased slightly to 98% and 97% respectively, the highest values recorded over the last 5 years. However at SCQF levels 5 and 6 the proportion of leavers attaining literacy and numeracy decreased slightly from 2019 values to 87% and 56% respectively.

33. In questionnaires 90% of pupils and 99% of staff indicated that children and young people were treated fairly and with respect;

Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people

34. Equity is at the heart of East Renfrewshire's Education strategy and attainment results reflect the work of teachers to vigorously support all pupils. The department has rigorous and highly effective approaches to monitor and track the equity of provision for young people across our schools.

35. The analysis of outcomes for children and young people in key equity groups is a central feature of our approaches to self-evaluation and quality improvement. The department uses data regularly to raise awareness; monitor progression; build leadership capability and capacity; plan interventions and improvement activity; and set targets.

36. Attainment evidence demonstrates that the closing of the poverty related attainment gap has been curtailed somewhat given the impact of Covid-19. For example:

- a) Developmental milestone data in 2020-21 demonstrates that the proportion of children residing in SIMD 1-3 properties achieving their milestones on entry to P1 decreased significantly by 9 percentage points, from a previous recorded high of 74% in 2019-20 (following a 4 year trend of improvement), to 65%; this is the lowest recorded value for each of the last 5 years. Meanwhile the proportion of children achieving their milestones residing in decile areas 4-7 and 8-10 has increased or remained relatively consistent over the same period, with 81% and 85% of children respectively attaining the measure, resulting in a significant gap between those in deciles 1-3 and the remainder of the cohort.
- b) In 2019-20 baseline, there was on average a 9 point gap between children residing in decile 1 and decile 10 residences in numeracy; in 2020-21 this average gap increased to 13 points.

- c) The gap between learners residing in quintile 1 and quintile 5 achieving the expected level of progression in the Broad General Education decreased significantly from 2016-17 to 2018-19 (last published) resulting in a reduction in the gap between these learners of 6%, 7%, 15% and 15% in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy, respectively. East Renfrewshire recorded the third and second highest reduction of the gap in literacy and numeracy respectively in 2018-19 nationally, from an already strong position of having one of the lowest gaps across Scotland initially.

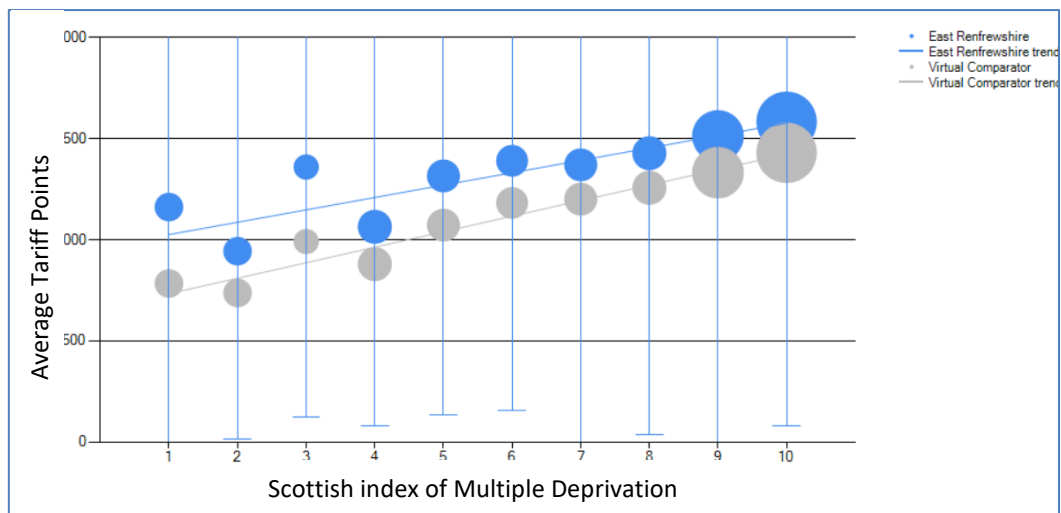
In 2020-21 the gap between these groups of learners increased and consequently the reduction in the gap since 2016-17 is now less impressive at 0.8%, 3%, 7.7% and 9.5% in each curricular area:

Quintile	Reading	Writing	Talking & Listening	Numeracy
Gap				
Q1 vs Q5 (Gap) 2020-2021	21.1%	22.8%	13.5%	18.6%
Q1 vs Q5 (Gap) 2018-2019	15.5%	18.8%	5.6%	13.1%
Q1 vs Q5 (Gap) 2017-2018	13.1%	13.3%	10.6%	11.4%
Q1 vs Q5 (Gap) 2016-2017	21.9%	25.8%	21.2%	28.1%

- d) In 2021, the gap in the proportion of S4 pupils residing in the most and least deprived postcodes attaining 5 or more awards at National 5 reduced; this is the third consecutive year where the gap has reduced and is the lowest recorded. Moreover the average total tariff points of S4 pupils residing in deciles 1-3, continues to increase at a significantly higher rate than the other decile groups, and has done so since 2018.

However for S4 pupils entitled to a free school meal the achievement of 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 decreased in 2021 by 4 percentage points from 2020, with around half of these pupils achieving this measure; 79% of all pupils attained this same measure.

- e) In 2019-20, analysis of young people leaving school at S4, S5 and S6 demonstrates that the average tariff points achieved by pupils residing in each decile area, is greater than the authority's virtual comparator in both total and complementary tariff points; in most years, performance in SIMD 1-6 is much greater than the comparator's. This is a trend demonstrated over the past 5 years.



- f) The proportion of pupils residing in quintile 1 areas entering a positive destination has increased by around 1% since 2015-16 to 94% in 2019-20; however this is below the 98% of young people residing in quintile 5 who entered a positive destination.

37. East Renfrewshire schools were allocated a total of £1,353,017 in Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) from Scottish Government for session 2020-2021. Head teachers developed PEF plans detailing how each school's funding would be used to provide targeted interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to close the poverty related attainment gap.

38. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Scottish Government relaxed the current guidance on Pupil Equity Funding to enable local authorities and Head Teachers to provide support that best meets the needs of their communities during the pandemic. In light of changes to national guidance, updated information for schools on planning and reporting on PEF spending was issued by the Education Department. As a result, the majority of schools allocated a proportion of their pupil equity funding to target learning loss and / or to provide emotional care to help support children and young people's wellbeing.

39. Schools have aligned the additional teaching resource from the Scottish Government with their Pupil Equity Funding and East Renfrewshire lowest 20% resources; to support targeted learning and teaching and address any gaps in learning caused by school closures. Head Teachers have the autonomy to decide how they deploy the additional staff funded by Scottish Government. In addition Educational Psychology continue to support pupils and staff with their wellbeing, providing a range of learning opportunities, interventions and advice.

40. During the pandemic, and in particular during periods of school closure, the Education Department provided support and advice to schools and early learning and childcare centres to ensure that vulnerable learners were given the highest level of support to engage with key school staff in school hubs and through remote learning. The Department also communicated very effectively with partners in HSCP and Third Sector during this period, to ensure that children and young people who needed additional support to engage with learning received this support.

41. Commendably our schools adapted their learning and teaching provision from face to face, to remote and back to face to face, with ease, whilst maintaining a focus

on high quality experiences for learners. Almost all our schools reported that most children continued to make progress during this time and were working towards appropriate learning targets and goals. Through an external scrutiny exercise undertaken by Education Scotland, the approaches of schools across East Renfrewshire were endorsed with recognition of the supports in place.

42. Whilst the vast majority of children and young people have adapted well to the changing provision of education over the last 18 months, a small number of children have struggled to adjust to the restrictions and the subsequent return to school and may require more intensive support to support the recovery of their learning. This can be very demanding on resource and the department is continuing to work with schools to identify where further support may be needed.

43. We continued to work in partnership with the University of Glasgow's widening participation team to provide pastoral care staff from all secondary schools with awareness raising CLPL relating to the support that can be provided for vulnerable groups of pupils, including those who are care experienced or young carers. We also involved partners from HSCP and Third Sector in this CLPL.

44. We were one of the first local authorities to work in partnership with the Carers Trust to provide CLPL on supporting young carers for probationer teachers. We continue to identify more young carers and to improve the support we provide for them. Our Young Carer Schools Group led an awareness raising session for school staff where we launched the young carer education toolkit produced by the Carers Trust and shared best practice from some of the schools who are part of the schools group. Another event was held to mark Young Carers Action Day, celebrating the achievements of our young carers and sharing their lived experiences.

45. Funding has been extended to June 2022 for a Young Carer development worker who supports our schools by providing assemblies, workshops and drop-in sessions for pupils, and training for staff.

Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing

46. The Education Department has very effective arrangements in place in relation to safeguarding. A multi-agency child protection audit identified areas for improvement in individual settings. Child protection coordinators' awareness and understanding of issues such as child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and Prevent is supported and enhanced by their participation in child protection coordinator meetings led by a QIO and the Lead Officer for child protection and through attendance at multi agency public protection training events which were held remotely as a result of restrictions in place.

47. An updated Child Protection briefing presentation has been produced and shared with schools for use with all staff during in service days. Senior and pastoral care staff in schools and across East Renfrewshire have participated in professional learning in the Signs of Safety approach to Child Protection which has been embraced by the local Child Protection Committee.

48. Mentors in Violence Prevention is a peer mentoring programme that gives young people the chance to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin gender-based violence, bullying and other forms of violence. In May 2021, four Secondary Schools along with partners from Police Scotland, HSCP, CLD, Women's Aid and Rape Crisis, participated in professional learning facilitated by Education Scotland for this programme. These staff have begun training volunteer senior pupils to take on the role of mentors. We plan to facilitate further training next

year for the remaining three secondary schools to join this programme.

49. We work in partnership with East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust's Active Schools Team to support children and young people's participation in physical activity. During the pandemic, the Active Schools Team were proactive and responsive to the frequently changing restrictions placed on physical activity. They focused on supporting primary teaching staff to deliver outdoor physical activity and provided a wide range of linked CLPL. They also supported school hubs during lockdown and provided targeted support for children who found it difficult to re-engage in learning following lockdown. The variety of activities provided encouraged increased attendance at the school hubs.

50. In questionnaires, almost all staff (96%) indicated that children were treated fairly and with respect by staff, with almost all (90%) children agreeing with this. Almost all staff (96%) also indicated that children and young people were encouraged and supported to treat others with respect, and almost all pupils (96%) agreed that other pupils treated them with respect.

51. In Autumn 2020 a new multi-stakeholder recovery team, known as Healthier Minds, was developed and was aligned to school communities to ensure the delivery of mental wellbeing supports to children, young people and their families.

52. Healthier Minds work alongside Primary and Secondary Schools (10-18 years), building on the outcomes from the original children and young people's mental wellbeing co-production event in November 2019. This includes facilitating targeted packages of support and the delivery of direct services to children, young people and their families, all based on individual needs.

53. The Healthier Minds screening hub model is in place to consider referrals for support. The screening hub meets on a weekly basis and is attended by regular representatives from CAMHS, social work, youth counselling, educational psychology and the Family Wellbeing Service. The hub discuss and agree the best possible supports and routes for the provision of these based on the needs of the child or young person (e.g. Healthier Minds Team member or youth counselling service).

54. The Healthier Minds website has a whole range of information and support including recovery specific resources for staff and pupils, recognising just how challenging the last year has been for so many people. The website continues to evolve in response to feedback from children, young people and their families and is the hub for those seeking more information on self-help, support, local services or more information.

55. The Healthier Minds report regularly to senior officers in Education and HSCP, most recently raising a concern about the increasing number of young people requiring support for their mental health and wellbeing. Although there is a correlation between those requiring support and those who were most challenged and isolated during Covid-19 restrictions, many of the young people accessing the support were coping well prior to the pandemic. There is also an emerging area of increasing need from children and young people with additional support needs and in particular, those with neuro developmental difficulties.

56. Almost all schools and early learning and childcare settings are engaged in the Rights Respecting School Award accreditation process, with 12 currently at Gold level. During assessment visits to East Renfrewshire schools, a

number of key strengths were noted including: strong pupil voice; a positive ethos where relationships are based on mutual respect; a focus on mental health and wellbeing; and leadership teams' desire to help every child succeed.

57. A QIO worked in partnership with UNICEF to provide CLPL for key staff in schools and early learning and childcare settings explaining the accreditation process and making links to the expectations of the new UNCRC Bill.

Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people

58. The Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the percentage of leavers in a positive destination, which was 96.2% in 2019-20 down from 97.5% in 2018-19. Encouragingly, 96.4% of the 2019-20 leavers were in a positive destination at the follow-up survey in March 2021.

59. Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Government worked together to develop a measure of participation which allows identification of the participation status of the wider 16-19 cohort. As agreed by Scottish Ministers the Annual Participation Measure (APM) has been adopted in the Scottish Government's [National Performance Framework](#) as the measure of young people's participation. In 2021, 97.2% of ERC 16-19 year olds were participating (as at Aug 2021), a slight increase on the 2020 value of 96.7%, well above the national figure of 92.1% with East Renfrewshire having the highest proportion participating nationally.

60. Over the past three years, the percentage of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 5 or Level 6 has increased from 21.2% to 28.3% (Level 5) and 10.9% to 15.8% (Level 6). The National figures for both measures sitting at 17.1% and 8.4% respectively.

61. Our partnership with SDS has ensured that our young people, staff and parents receive the most up to date, relevant labour market information to support their learner pathways. Staff participated CLPL to enhance their knowledge in relation to careers information and guidance and the Department delivered targeted training around the Career Education Standard, My World of Work and the datahub.

62. We develop and nurture relationships with employers to support learner experiences and broaden learner pathways. Our ability to showcase the skills of our young people to employers has been impacted by the restrictions in place to mitigate against Covid-19. A priority of the newly introduced DYW Coordinators will be to work with employers to allow our young people to demonstrate and apply these skills in different contexts.

63. Vocational Education continues to contribute to the achievement and attainment of young people in the senior phase and support them to develop skills for work. This offer has been developed to include courses across a range of locations including partner colleges and our vocational facilities at Barrhead High School. The vocational opportunities on offer reduced as a result Covid 19 with more young people opting to study in school. In addition many partners had challenges redesigning their courses to a remote learning model.

64. To ensure continued efficiency the department reviewed the course options available and uptake, which led to a reduction to 40 courses being available in 2021 – 2022 from a pre-pandemic position of 60 in 2019-2020. The number of young people participating in vocational courses also reduced from 561 in 2019-20, to 346 in 2020 – 2021. Although this is very disappointing, the figures participating in vocational education at the start of 2021-2022 has increased to 368.

65. Despite the cautious approach during the pandemic by young people selecting vocational courses, they continue to embrace the Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) scheme and this is now embedded in the senior phase offer in our schools. The unique opportunity of work based learning provided by (FA) has increased from 11 courses in 2020-2021 to 15 in 2021-2022.

66. The progress of our young people is closely monitored to ensure successful outcomes for every young person undertaking a vocational course. This tracking is possible due to the support of college partners and training providers who work well with us to maintain pupil progress and intervene where appropriate, offering further support as required.

67. A report detailing our progress in [Developing the Young Workforce](#) was shared at Education Committee in June 2021.

CONCLUSION

68. A relentless focus by the department and schools to raise the bar for all learners and at the same time reduce the inequalities of outcome experienced by our more disadvantaged children and young people has continued despite the challenging context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

69. Progress towards the four national priorities as set out in the National Improvement Framework has been impacted by the periods of school closures and the continued disruption caused by the pandemic.

70. For some children and young people the impact of the pandemic has been far reaching and there is a continued need to focus resource on reducing inequalities to ensure that all recover and there is no long term legacy for our youngest citizens.

71. The implementation of priorities in the NIF and Improvement Plan will continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis within the Education Department, with progress reported to the Education Committee on an annual basis through yearly presentations on attainment and through the department's and schools' Standards and Quality Reports.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

72. There are no financial or efficiency implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

73. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the Education Department's progress in implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
30 September 2021

Convener Contact Details

Councillor, Alan Lafferty, Convener for Education and Equalities

Tel: 07812214366

Report Authors

Kathleen McGuire, Quality Improvement Officer
Tel: 0141 577 3865
Kathleen.McGuire@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement)
Tel: 0141 577 3204
Janice.Collins@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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