



NORTHERN ALLIANCE LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Report by Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to inform the Comhairle about the Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment Project, the toolkit it has developed and the secondment of staff to a delivery team within each partner authority.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This is the final year of Scottish Government funding to support Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs). The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative is utilising this funding to improve learning, teaching, and assessment across our region. The project involves the development and implementation of a new toolkit for schools and funding for a Quality Improvement Officer for each partner authority to support implementation of the toolkit and improvement in practice. Each post is part-time for two days per week, fixed term for 11 months.
- 2.2 Inspection results and local authority data across the Northern Alliance is telling us that we need to improve our approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment across the region. High quality learning, teaching and assessment is key to improving learner outcomes.
- 2.3 Over recent months, a team of experienced head teachers and central officers from each of the eight local authorities have been collaborating to develop a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Toolkit for early years, primary and secondary establishments. The toolkit contains a suite of resources and guidance to support engagement with the toolkit.
- 2.4 The Toolkit is designed to support improvement activity as part of scheduled school Improvement Planning work. Using the toolkit, seconded officers are collaborating with schools and settings to target improvement across the identified themes. Through whole school targeted improvement activity, it is anticipated that engagement with the Northern Alliance learning, teaching and assessment toolkit alongside local authority activity will reduce variation and improve the quality of learning, teaching, and assessment.
- 2.5 Data will be gathered at local and regional level to help monitor progress over time to ensure the changes made lead to improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note the Report and continue to support the work of the Quality Improvement Officer to reduce variation and raise standards in learning, teaching, and assessment in Western Isles schools.**

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Appendix: [Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment Toolkit](#)
Background Papers: [How Good is Our School? 4th Edition \(HGIOS4\)](#)

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	The post of Quality Improvement Officer for Learning, Teaching and Assessment is fully funded by a redistribution to the authority of grant funding received by the Northern Alliance from Scottish Government.
Legal	None
Staffing	The seconded QIO is backfilled in their substantive post for the duration of their post, as are any knock-on vacancies created.
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	Applicable UNCRC Articles: 28 – A Right to Education 29 – Goals of Education
Corporate Strategy	Support Children, Families and Young People: - Raise ambition and attainment, in particular to address inequalities.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 In October 2023, the Northern Alliance conducted an analysis of inspection gradings and Local Authority data which highlighted a need to reduce variation in understanding and improve the quality of learning, teaching, and assessment across the Northern Alliance as specifically evidence in the inspection gradings for Quality Indicator 2.3 – Learning, Teaching and Assessment, as defined in How Good is Our School 4 (HGIOS4).
- 5.2 Following the needs analysis exercise, it was agreed by the Regional Improvement Forum (consisting of Directors and Heads of Service from each of the Northern Alliance local authorities) to narrow the focus of regional improvement activity to learning, teaching and assessment.
- 5.3 In December 2023, it was announced that Scottish Government funding to Regional Improvement Collaboratives would end in March 2025.
- 5.4 The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Forum (the leadership group of the eight Directors and Chief Officers) made the decision to focus all funding on producing a regional resource which would add value to local authority learning, teaching, and assessment activity. The funding would also support the development a sustainable approach to regional collaboration beyond March 2025.

DETAIL

- 6.1 From January to March 2024, central team officers and HMIE Associate Assessors from each of the Northern Alliance local authorities worked together to develop the framework for the Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Toolkit. They made use of the needs analysis data to highlight six themes within learning, teaching and assessment which required the greatest improvement:
 - Leadership of Learning, Teaching and Assessment
 - Building a Shared Understanding

- Pace, Challenge and Differentiation
- Environment, Experiences, and Interactions
- Learner Participation and Ownership of Learning
- Effective Use of Data

- 6.1 Time was spent developing 'overviews' for each theme which outlined features of highly effective practice. They were exemplified by real life examples from ELC settings and Primary and Secondary schools. The overviews provided the foundations for further development of the LTA Toolkit.
- 6.2 In April 2024, a new team of central team officers and head teachers from each local authority in the Northern Alliance were seconded for two days per week. Their seconded role has been developed to contribute to the development of the LTA toolkit and to use the toolkit to add value to local authority learning, teaching, and assessment activity through working with a small number of schools and settings. Officers are also tasked with capturing examples of effective practice locally which are included and used to exemplify the themes within LTA toolkit.
- 6.3 The LTA toolkit now offers a suite of resources to support schools and teams plan and implement improvement activity in relation to each theme. The suite of resources consists of:
- LTA Theme Overview
 - Self-Evaluation Tool
 - Professional Learning Resources
 - Resources to Support Practice
 - Examples of Effective Practice
 - Wider Reading and Research
- 6.4 Implementation guidance and templates support school leaders to build collective responsibility for improvement by taking a whole team approach to self-evaluation, planning, and implementation. This process aligns with local authority school improvement planning processes and templates.
- 6.5 Seconded officers are using the LTA toolkit to support a small number of schools to improve approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment. This involves regular school visits and engagement with the whole staff team to conduct self-evaluation and develop a shared action plan. Support is also provided for teams to monitor their data and ensure the changes they make lead to improvement.
- 6.6 The LTA toolkit is also designed to support universal access by schools who wish to use the toolkit independently. Seconded officers have met with head teachers and central teams within their local authorities to raise awareness of this resource and encourage engagement.
- 6.7 Seconded officers meet with their Northern Alliance counterparts weekly to share progress and practice. Data is captured weekly in relation to school engagement and progress within each local authority (process measures).
- 6.8 A data dashboard has been developed to capture outcome measures for monitoring regional improvement over time. Measures include:
- School reported self- evaluation gradings of Learning, Teaching and Assessment
 - Inspection gradings of Learning, Teaching and Assessment
 - School self-evaluation rating for Learning Teaching and Assessment Themes
 - Combined P1/P4/P7 ACEL data (unweighted mean)
 - S3 ACEL data – Third Level or better (unweighted mean)
 - 1 or more award at SCQF Level 5 or better

- 6.9 The Regional Improvement Forum receives monthly updates in relation to process measures and outcome measures where relevant. This enables the Regional Improvement to monitor progress and make changes as required.
- 6.10 As of the end of August 2024, fifty-two schools across the Northern Alliance are currently engaging with the LTA toolkit and being supported by seconded officers. The LTA toolkit has had a total number of 1,732 page views. Head teachers are commenting favourably in initial engagement. One head teacher stated, "I found the process supportive and helpful and a valuable way to really focus on specific improvements. I hope that this will provide a focus for us as a team and that the clear measures will indicate improvements and progress towards improving our learning, teaching, and assessment."
- 6.11 The Quality Improvement Officer raised awareness of the LTA toolkit across Comhairle schools and settings at August in-service session for teachers across the islands. Further presentations have been made to school leaders across Lewis, Harris, Uist and Barra since then. The Quality Improvement Officer is now meeting directly with individual schools and settings to support with self-evaluation and early implementation of the LTA toolkit. Engagement has been positive so far and the LTA toolkit is being well received.
- 6.12 Seconded officers will continue to raise awareness of the LTA toolkit and engage with schools. In addition, officers will work together to develop an implementation plan for continued collaboration post Scottish Government funding.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Quality Improvement Officer for Learning, Teaching and Assessment will support schools and settings to improve practice in learning, teaching, and assessment through the implementation of the Northern Alliance toolkit.