WEST PARTNERSHIP INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the West Partnership (WPS) Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) with the **findings from an external evaluation conducted on WPS process and impacts** since its inception in January 2018. The main aim of the evaluation was to address three key research questions, which centre on the contribution of the RIC to the local authorities, the contribution of Education Scotland`s (ES`s) Regional Improvement Team (RIT) to the RIC and the extent to which the RICs Learning System has built collective agency to accelerate improvement. These provided the framework for a set of focussed sub-questions based on evaluating broader impact.

The **Key Findings** suggest that WPS strategic vision and aims and objectives are clear and expressed in relation to attainment, learning and teaching and building capacity. Effective collaboration is believed to be the driver of systems change that should be greater than the sum of its parts.

The **key factors which have enabled progress are:** establishing the infrastructure for systems improvement through collaborative networks and culture, early buy-in from directors and a collective commitment to the Learning System. Relationships and the role and capacity of key intermediaries have been crucial to the process. It is recognised that the impact on learning and teaching and positive outcomes for children and young people takes time, but there were signs those were beginning to happen.

Key factors or features which hindered progress at strategic level centred around the establishment of the Partnership. Early on key factors included time, building consensus on approach, purpose and vision and agreeing respective roles and responsibilities. Communications could be further enhanced, both internally, by having more opportunities for informal communications between the Board and lead officers and between workstreams and externally, through 'external messaging' to classroom practitioners. Workloads were raised as a concern by the local authority officers, in terms of sustaining partnership activity, which is also the case for those who lead the ever-growing span of partnership networks that will require support for future activity. Time required to attend and travel to meetings was considered a barrier, although it was believed that the increase in virtual meetings could overcome those issues and lead to more inclusivity. IT was deemed to be challenging in contexts where unreliable connections and access for some families and communities were problematic.

Partnership activity is promoting a collaborative ethos and infrastructure, building agency and capacity within, between and beyond schools and implementing a range of innovative and valued resources and approaches across the Partnership. Workstream activity was starting to impact on learning and teaching in the classroom. The plans of the workstreams were affected by COVID-19, but despite this, there have been positive adaption and progress. The main challenge is to **sustain and embed these initial successes and to invest in independent** evaluation and monitoring for understanding the impact of the WPS.

The WPS was seen as **responding swiftly to the pandemic** by suspending all professional learning activities and events, it also developed a one-year Recovery Strategic Plan to set out how best it could support practitioners and systems` leaders during and post COVID-19. This included streamlining the Partnership's activity into three workstreams and facilitating a more network-based approach. More recently, an Interim Action Plan has been proposed.

Opportunities for knowledge mobilisation and empowerment continue but face challenges regarding the sustainability of innovation and networks. This approach is consistent with recommendations relating to the "Networked Learning System" and digitalisation of learning and teaching as set out in the recent report by the First Minister's International Council of Education Advisors (ICEA, 2020).

Systematic as well as informal collaborative efforts led to significant learning and teaching developments. One such systems-level development that has gained increased traction was the **online school** and the development of a range of online resources in learning and teaching. This is a strength of the Partnership's activity. There was some concern that online support might not be suitable for families who do not have equal access to IT. The evidence suggests that the WPS contributed to and added value to local authorities' response to COVID-19 through co-ordinating activity by workstream leaders and others in key positions. Enhancing access to expanded networks to share ideas and advice to help deal with the effects of the pandemic was also highlighted. However, there was concern that the challenges presented by the pandemic meant that staff in the local authorities and schools had been so focussed on recovery plans that there had been little time for WPS activity.

The **work of the WPS had contributed to the work of local authorities**. The extent of this contribution was dependent partly on the authorities' capacity for collaboration. The Partnership had been active, increasingly online, in sharing knowledge and ideas in extending professional relationships and networks and promoting collective action. Workstream lead officers were seen as key to driving development and provided neutral support and advice. Similarly, local authority officers, particularly, at the start of the Partnership, were vital in facilitating and supporting the range of activities across the workstreams. More recently, the growing numbers of volunteers on, for example, subject networks have played an integral part in 'filling a gap in the system'.

Capacity building has taken place through knowledge mobilisation and individual agency and development of professional capital. There is a growing cadre of 'middle managers' and headteachers/depute headteachers skilled in practitioner inquiry/collaborative action research. At local authority level, it was recognised that it would be headteachers and teachers who will have the greatest impact on classroom change. Therefore, the Partnership should continue to work with and engage and empower them across the strata of the WPS.

Overall, the contribution by ES's RIT **was perceived as positive. This view was most positive in those that had worked closely with ES personnel on the ground across the workstreams.** When ES personnel worked closely with workstreams or groups to provide specialist advice, support and resources this was at its strongest. ES interviewees also believed they had added value to the work of the WPS in several ways but thought they could have had more of a contribution initially if they had been more involved in co-producing plans and shaping the offer accordingly. Some of the Board members recognised that at the outset there was a lack of pace and that relationships between ES and local authority staff took time to develop. As roles and responsibilities gain more clarity the pace of action is accelerating and relationships are being strengthened.

Collective agency was being built, but there is less evidence of accelerated improvement. The outlook was optimistic but has been inhibited by COVID-19. This was enabled by a focus on leadership promoting collaboration and agency, rather than competition.

The Partnership Learning System with its focus on the use of appropriate data/evidence was seen as helping to progress collective agency and empowerment, but there needed to be a continual focus on promoting a shared understanding of it, especially as practitioners became involved in WPS activity. This was particularly the case with the concept of 'collective agency'. This is likely to become more important as the concept of the 'Networked Learning System' (ICEA, 2020) builds on some of the ideas that underpins the innovative work of the WPS's 'Learning System'

The RIC is still at an early stage in its development and that evidence of impact on learners will take time. Nevertheless, the evidence of its influence and progress regarding its objectives to date is encouraging. We highlight key themes to support this: t**raction regarding the concept and practice of collaborative learning as a driver for improvement; developing an effective internal architecture for change including the role of lead officers; knowledge mobilisation; adding value to the local authorities and capacity building and increased personal agency and professional capital.**

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this full report, (summary report available), is to provide the West Partnership (WPS) Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) with the findings from an external evaluation conducted on WPS process and impacts since its inception in January 2018.

Section 2 covers the policy context in which the RICs were established and the current context of the WPS. We believe this context to be important and necessary in scene-setting as it illustrates some of the `political thinking` driving the establishment of the RICs and outlines the anticipated conditions and parameters of operation. Appendix A includes more detail on the functions and principles of the RIC as envisaged by Scottish Government. The section ends with a focus on WPS RIC structure, aims and objectives and how those have evolved as the WPS has grown. This policy context, considered in the round, is a useful touchpoint when considering our three key research questions and sub-questions in the Research Evaluation Methodology in Section 3 and in our Key Findings in Section 4.

The main aim of the evaluation is to address three key research questions highlighted in Section 3.2, which centre on the contribution of the RIC to the local authorities, the contribution of Education Scotland`s (ES's) Regional Improvement Team (RIT) to the RIC and the extent to which the RIC`s Learning System has built collective agency to accelerate improvement. The subsequent sections consider the key findings, from focussed sub-questions, in what has worked well and less well and the factors that have contributed to that in WPS progress, and activities that are said to be successful or impactful. These are considered in light of their contribution to the overarching research questions.

The penultimate section offers an insight into the WPS Recovery response to the pandemic, in supporting teachers and schools and also interviewee thoughts on future WPS activity post-pandemic.

We conclude with an account of the key themes and learning that have emerged from our evaluation and critically reflect on WPS progress to date and offer some key challenges and issues for consideration for the WPS and key stakeholders.

2 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK (NIF) AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In June 2016 the Scottish Government published Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education – A Delivery Plan for Scotland. This built on the work contained in the National Improvement Framework (NIF) published in January 2016. It was developed to address the recommendations of the 2015 OECD Review on improving schools in Scotland. A key recommendation from that report was:

> *We call for a strengthened "middle" operating through networks and collaboratives among schools, and in and across local authorities. We see leadership best operating not only in the middle but from the middle and indeed see an extended middle as essential to allow CfE [Curriculum for Excellence] to reach its full potential. Yet, so far as the local authorities are integral to such a development, there needs to be complementary action to address and overcome the gaps between the high- and low-performing authorities. This is another important element of "closing the gap".* (OECD, 2016).

The Scottish Government has a statutory duty under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to review NIF and publish subsequent annual plans. The latest NIF 2020 builds on previous plans, incorporating improvements in the quality of data that drive improvement for children and young people across the Scottish education system. The NIF plan continues to be informed by the recommendations of the International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) 2016-18 report.

One issue from the review was the need to strengthen the voice of young people in decision making in appropriate structures and to maintain focus and support for early learning and childcare and health and wellbeing. These are vitally important in children and young people's holistic learning, life and work skills development and are an integral part of the four CfE capacities. The key priorities of the NIF are summarised below:

- 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.

2.2 REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES (RIC) CONTEXT

The NIF sets out the vision and priorities of the Scottish Government in taking forward the Education Governance Next Steps (June 2017) document. This details the process by which the vision of excellence and equity for every child in Scotland would be delivered through educational regions. A fundamental aspect of the proposal was for an empowered school-led system, aligned to the NIF and influenced by performance data and accelerated improvement support.

The Scottish Government's Governance Review: Next Steps (2017) outlined proposals for the next wave of reform in Scottish education. This included the introduction of a Scottish Education Council and a Headteachers' Charter, designed to give more power and autonomy to school

leaders. The Scottish College for Educational Leadership was merged with ES, the improvement and inspection agency, and the proposed establishment of a Workforce Council, which appeared to have implications for the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

The Governance Review also outlined significant proposals for reforming the middle tier, including the establishment of six Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs), sitting between government and local authorities. The RICs were intended to provide support for educational improvement to headteachers and schools, facilitating collaborative and partnership working across regions (Scottish Government, 2017). This type of transition in educational systems is highlighted by Hadfield and Ainscow, (2018) in their consideration of the role of intermediaries in promoting self-improving organisations operating within flatter networked systems. In terms of within, between and beyond school improvement (Chapman, 2016), the reforms are designed to work across boundaries at all levels breaking down traditional cultural hierarchies and the blockages that can arise from bureaucracy. We argue that lower regulation combined with higher social cohesion, creates the conditions for egalitarian culture underpinned by mutualistic self-improving organisations that operate within a flatter, networked system.

Each [RIC] was to be a conduit between different local authorities and their schools, with the capacity to respond to need through providing access to specialist advice, offering a resource that might not otherwise be available and cutting across traditional hierarchies (low social regulation) (Chapman, 2016).

The Scottish Government envisaged that 'educational regions' would be appropriate vehicles to drive this forward. While there was some opposition to the idea, evidenced by responses to a consultation, the Scottish Government believed that there was a strong case for a regional approach to strengthening capacity and promoting school improvement across local authorities (SPICe, 2020).

Six RICs were established in 2017. The original proposal for 'education regions' changed over a year to become one of 'collaboratives' with the purpose of ensuring the 'centrality' of local government within the collaboratives and to foster opportunities for partnership working. The original idea for leadership of each RIC was that the lead would report to HM Chief Inspector/ Chief Executive of ES. However, this changed to a Regional Improvement Lead, employed by a local authority. The overarching remit of the RIC was to:

- Develop a Regional Improvement Plan by January 2018
- Facilitate collaborative working across the region
- Provide educational improvement support to practitioners.

2.3 REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

In setting out its Guidance to RICs, the Scottish Government emphasised the importance of the Regional Improvement Plans in RIC implementation and how each one should develop its own key features, demonstrating how it draws on existing school and local authority improvement plans and National Improvement Plan Priorities. In addition, each plan should be agreed with the Chief Inspector of Education and peer-reviewed by two other RIC teams and ES`s Regional Lead Officer. These should be viewed in a regional context in relation to available performance evidence and the appropriateness of interventions and strategies. The Scottish Government was

clear in the guidance that it anticipated a different way of working through the collaboratives. They foresaw the benefit of 'additionality', rather than duplication or displacement activity (Additional information on RIC functions and principles in Appendix A).

2.4 SCOTLAND'S CURRENT REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVES

In 2017, Scotland's 32 local authorities were organised into six regional 'clusters' or Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs):

- the Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- the Northern Alliance
- the South East Collaborative
- the South West Collaborative
- the Tayside Collaborative
- the West Partnership.

Each RIC has a huge variation in geographical spread and population size and density. The Northern Alliance, for example, covers approximately 60% of the area of Scotland, whereas the Forth Valley and West Lothian RIC covers about four percent. However, when it comes to population size, the WPS RIC includes approximately 35% of the population of Scotland, whereas the Tayside RIC, approximately eight percent.

2.5 THE WEST PARTNERSHIP RIC

The WPS is a collaboration between eight local authorities in the west of Scotland. It involves East and West Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North and South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire. The RIC contains more than one third of Scotland's children and includes approximately the same proportion of pre-school, primary and secondary practitioners. It is, therefore, in a strong position to influence the national agenda and outcomes regarding achieving excellence and equity for all learners. Since the WPS's inception, the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change (ROC) at the University of Glasgow has provided external research and evaluation, support for collaborative action research (CAR) across collaborative networks and strategic critical friendship and support for the development of the WPS as a 'Learning System'.

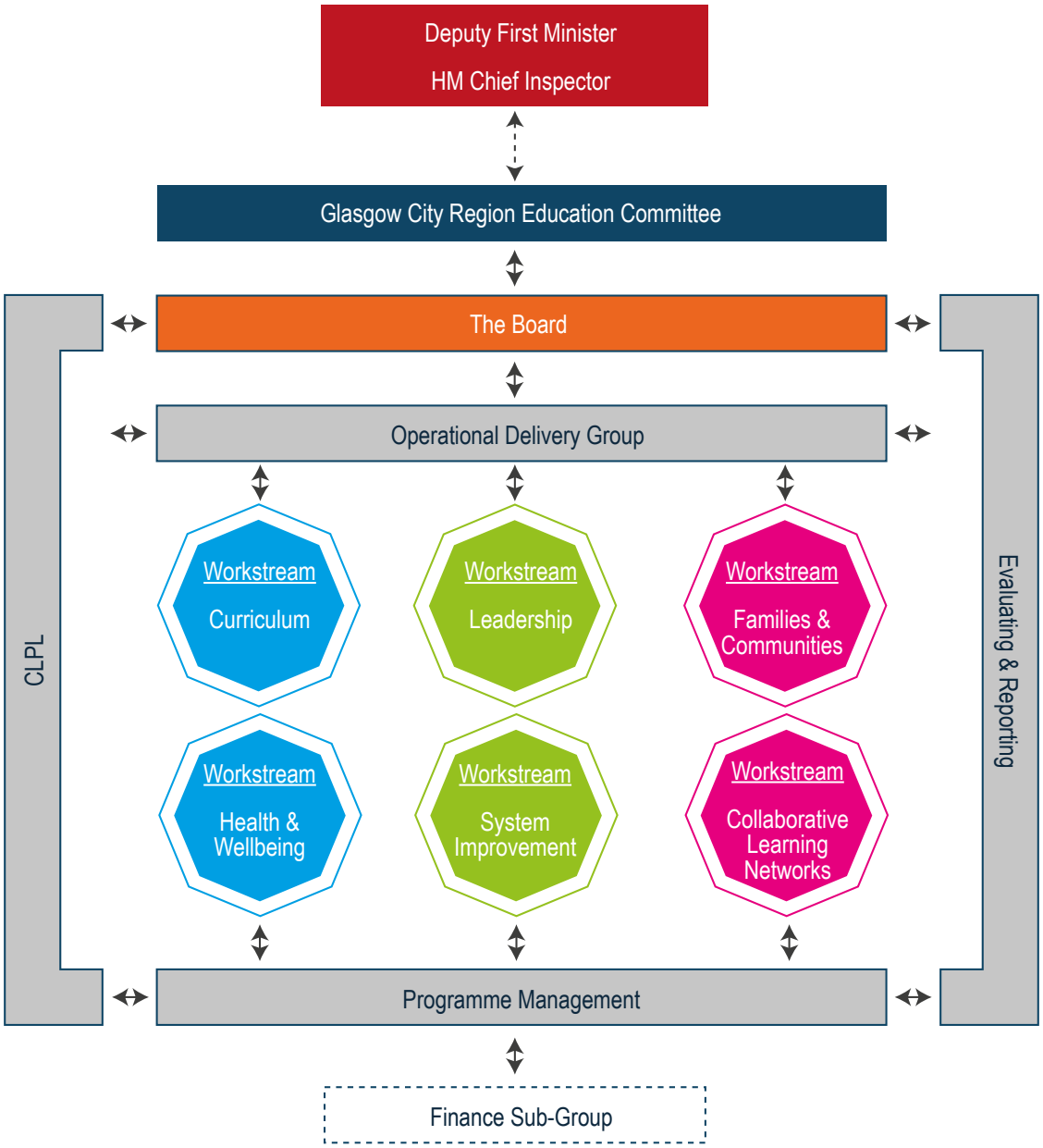
The profile of each council area in the WPS is diverse. East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire are two of the most affluent areas in Scotland while the other partner local authorities include the country's least affluent areas. Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and large areas of Renfrewshire are all 'Challenge Authorities' within the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The WPS sits across three regions as defined by the Developing the Young Workforce – Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy (DYW) and across three college regions – Glasgow City, West College Scotland and Lanarkshire. (WPS Phase 1 Plan).

There are more than 1,000 nurseries, primary, secondary and special schools in the WPS, serving mainly urban but also many rural communities. As such, schools vary in size from some of the smallest in South Lanarkshire to some of the largest primary schools in East Renfrewshire and the largest secondary schools in Glasgow. This broad range, as well as a compact geography, gives the WPS a high capacity for collaboration and learning. (WPS RIC Plan 2018).

2.6 THE WEST PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

The WPS is governed by a board comprised of the eight Directors (or equivalents) of Education from the eight local authorities who make up the RIC, the senior regional advisor from ES, and the Partnership senior lead officer. The ROC team joined the newly formed RIC Governance Board as critical friends to provide challenge, support and strategic advice. The Board reports to the Glasgow City-Region Education Committee, comprised of elected members, Conveners of Education (or equivalent) from each of the local member authorities.

Figure 1: West Partnership RIC Governance



Source: Adapted from WPS RIC Regional Improvement Plan 2019 – 2022

The WPS also put a support infrastructure in place and developed eight workstreams, each with its own action plan, that aligned to strategic priorities. To build buy-in from each local authority, each workstream was led by a Director of Education/Children's Services. The workstreams and aims were:

- **Collaborative Learning Networks (CLN)** – To establish a systematic approach to build upon and roll out collaborative working to embed robust processes that will lead to high quality and sustainable practices across the WPS.
- **Families and Communities** – To continue to identify, share and develop best practices which support families living in poverty, build community capacity, increase parental engagement and improve equity.
- **Curriculum** – As part of the WPS approach to growing a Learning System, the RIC was to establish self-sustaining subject/specialist area networks that would bring about improvement in learning, teaching, assessment and attainment. Support schools and ELC settings across the region to ensure they are designing and delivering a curriculum that has a range of pathways, will meet the needs of all children and young people and leads to improved outcomes for them.
- **Health and Wellbeing** – To share best practices in approaches to inclusive pedagogy to promote progression and increased support for children and young people. To examine the results of the national health and wellbeing survey to identify and explore areas of common need.
- **Leadership** – To ensure that senior leaders across the RIC are well informed of evolving career pathways and opportunities for leadership. To develop supportive approaches for senior leaders in consideration of leadership actions within an empowered system.
- **Systems improvement** – To identify, share and develop best practices in quality improvement across the WPS.
- **Evaluating and Reporting** – To support the WPS with self-evaluation, measuring and reporting impact of the improvement plan and demonstrate coordinated and collective impact. To support other workstreams with data analysis and use of data and information. This is considered a service workstream.
- **Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL)** – To support the development of learning networks by facilitating collaborative events and professional development opportunities. This is considered a service workstream.

The Board took the decision in February 2020 to subsume the Health and Wellbeing Workstream into the other workstreams to ensure the centrality of this area of focus across all activity.

The original workstreams remain priority areas and are still the focus of the WPS but in the current plan they have now been streamlined to three workstreams: **Collaborative Learning Networks; Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Leadership, Empowerment and Improvement.**

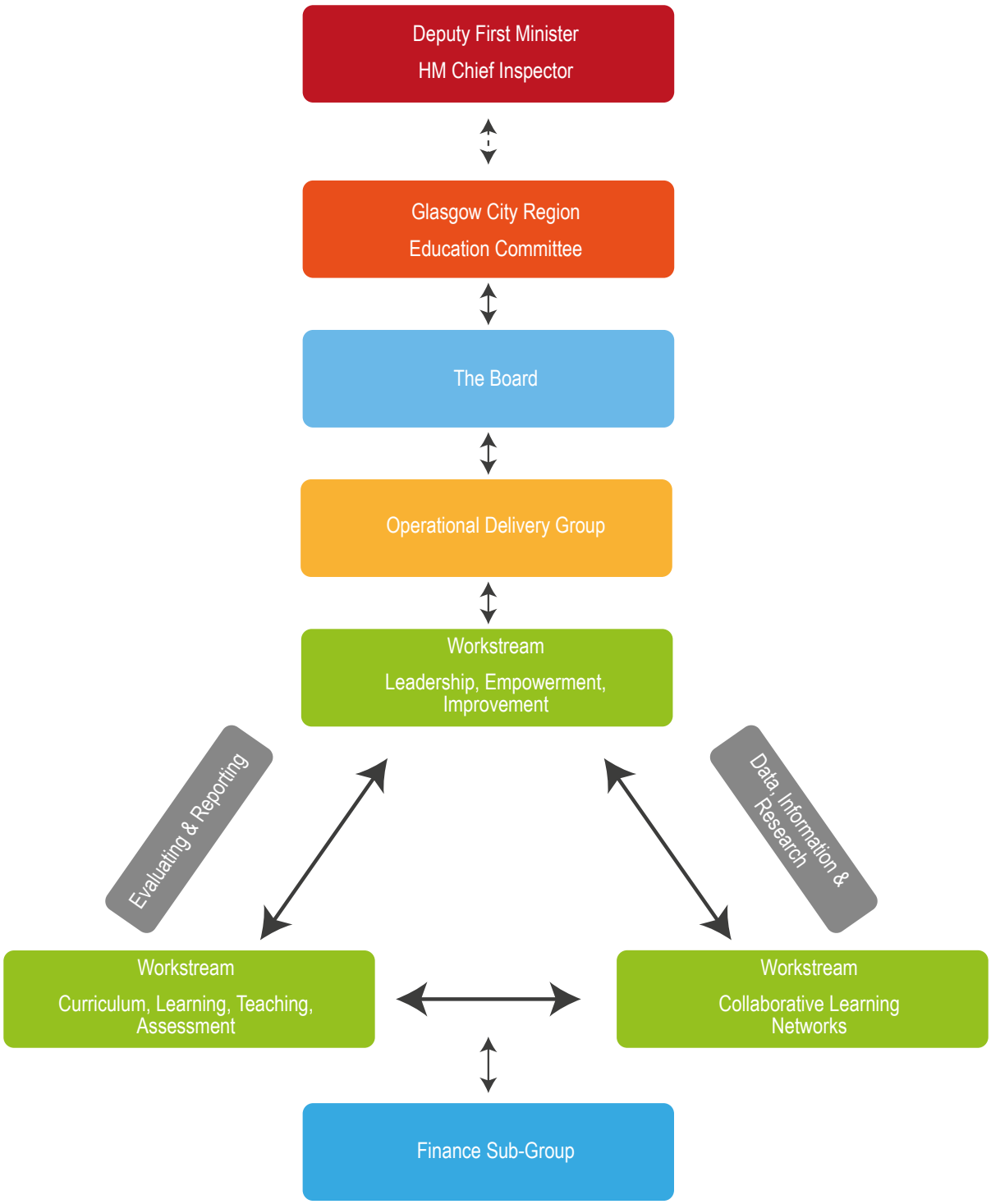
2.6.1 RIC FUNDING

RIC funding is proved by the Scottish Government to support delivery of the RIC`s Regional Improvement Plan, based on individual resourcing requests from each collaborative to support dedicated regional capacity building and planned RIC activity and is managed through Scottish Government Grant Offer conditions. It is provided from the Education Reform budget and from the Attainment Scotland Fund (for regional activity relating to attainment).

2018/19 was the first year that the Scottish Government provided funding to all 6 of Scotland's RICs to support delivery of their first full regional improvement plans of September 2018. The

WPS was awarded £828,488 to cover activity in the school year 2018/19. Subsequent annual funding has been at a similar level.

Figure 2: West Partnership RIC Governance



Source: Adapted from WPS RIC Regional Improvement Plan 2020-2021

3 RESEARCH EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The research team adopted a mixed-method approach, using quantitative and qualitative techniques to address the research questions outlined below. This evaluation report represents one facet of the qualitative strand of our research methodology, and activity across the RIC. It complements other evidence gathered, including a quantitative survey of classroom/ establishment practitioners and the senior leadership team (SLT) to assess the effectiveness of collaboration and related inquiry across the WPS in 2019. Those findings were reported in the West Partnership Conditions for Change Interim Highlights Report (December 2019).

Qualitative methods were seen as the most appropriate approach to gather the information and evidence to address the research questions for this strand of the evaluation (e.g.: Menter et al., 2011). This included gathering primary and secondary data from a range of relevant sources within and outwith the WPS. This mixed methods research approach is a form of triangulation which is generally seen to overcome the potential weaknesses in a single methods study. Denzin (1978) identified four broad types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory and methodological. We have employed aspects of all of these in our evaluation, however, it is not theory-dependent, but draws on appropriate literature to support our other evidence. One of the main benefits in using this approach is to reduce the potential risk of bias, particularly in sampling and single-investigator studies, (Hastings, 2010). Overall, the main aim of this approach is to corroborate evidence from a range of sources and to enhance the utility and credibility of the study.

Primary data has mainly been gathered from a range of practitioners and other key stakeholders in the Partnership. This has been conducted through ethnographic notetaking, and documented observation at professional learning events, professional dialogue and focus groups with practitioner and workstream facilitators. The main source of primary data for this report is a series of semi-structured interviews conducted between July - September 2020. These are detailed below.

Table 1: Evaluation interviewees by local authority and workstream

Local Authorities/Education Scotland	Number of Interviews	Workstream
East Renfrewshire	10	CLN, Curriculum, CLPL, F&C, Leadership, Systems Improvement
Renfrewshire	8	CLN, Curriculum, CLPL, E&R, F&C
East Dunbartonshire	6	CLN, Curriculum, CLPL, F&C
Glasgow	5	CLN, F&C, Systems Improvement
South Lanarkshire	4	CLN, Curriculum, F&C, Leadership
North Lanarkshire	3	CLN, Curriculum, CLPL, Leadership
West Dunbartonshire	2	CLN, Leadership
Inverclyde	2	Curriculum, CLPL, Systems Improvement
Education Scotland	5	Not disclosed*
Total	45	

**to disclose would potentially identify interviewee*

Key:
CLN : Collaborative Learning Networks
CLPL: Career Long Professional Learning
E&R: Evaluating and Reporting
F&C : Families and Communities

3.2 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching research questions we wished to address were:

- How does the West Partnership RIC contribute to the work of the local authorities?
- How does Education Scotland`s RIT contribute to the WPS?
- To what extent has the WPS RIC`s Learning System built collective agency to accelerate improvement?

These questions were developed out of key areas of interest for evaluation at the start of the programme e.g., innovative involvement of the national improvement agency for education and new concepts of collaborative working. These were based on the WPS's vision, aims and objectives and the education system and policy context in which it operates, as outlined in Section 2.

The decision to use in-depth, semi-structured [virtual] face-to-face interviews as the main focus of the qualitative element of our research was seen to be the most appropriate way to address those questions and provide a 'rich narrative' of WPS activity and progress. These semi-structured questions were supplemented by the sub-questions outlined below.

3.3 INTERVIEW DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Interview question design was informed by the research questions and supplemented by more focussed sub-questions on broader impact: on WPS and workstream aims and objectives; individual roles; governance; what worked well and less well and the impact of COVID-19 on recovery plans and beyond. The questions were slightly modified to reflect individual roles: board members, lead officers, workstream members and facilitators. There were also additional questions for workstream facilitators around inputs to collaborative learning and impacts on professional capacity.

Individual invitations to take part in an interview were sent to approximately 70% of the WPS workstream members. Those recipients were selected on the basis of a cross section of positions across the strata of the partnership, dual or more representation on the workstreams and geographical spread across the local authorities. These included: board directors; senior local authority managers; Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs); ES attainment advisers; ES representatives and headteachers/depute headteachers. This resulted in 45 interviews in total as indicated in Table 1. Confirmed interviewees were sent two documents beforehand, a Plain Language Statement/ Research Consent and an Interview Topic Guide. The interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes each. Interviews were recorded with the participants` permission and interviewers took notes during the interview. Interview recordings were transcribed, and content analysed using thematic coding.

Secondary data was collected through document scanning from a wide variety of sources, both internal and external to the Partnership. These included but were not limited to: WPS Regional Improvement Plans; WPS meeting minutes; workstream outcome planners; evaluating and reporting reports; the WPS's evaluation event feedback forms; and Scottish Government publications and other relevant policy context reports. This has been underpinned by literature on networked systems, partnership and collaborative working and the CAR approach.

Unfortunately, due to the impacts of COVID-19, CLN practitioners could not complete the CAR cycle, which meant that there was limited follow-up in terms of inquiry project outcomes. However, in supporting the participants throughout the process and gathering ongoing evidence on agency and capacity, we feel confident in our observations and insights.

4 KEY FINDINGS

This section focusses on the findings from the key areas covered in the interviews to address our key research framework questions and the focussed sub-questions on broader impact.

4.1 ON AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Respondents reflected that the main aims of the WPS were to promote and facilitate effective collaboration that enhances the sharing of knowledge to promote professional learning and enhance practice to bring about improvement at each level of the system. It was also stressed that one of the WPS's ultimate aims was that its impact on professional learning would promote positive outcomes for learners.

> *The] role of WPS is to add value to the work of the local authorities, not to duplicate what they do. It should draw on knowledge, skills and resources across the RIC to improve systems, [and] practice so that, ultimately, there are improved learner outcomes. RICs are there to support local authorities and headteachers to make a difference as these are the key factors for impact in learner outcomes.*
>
> *Board member*

The key aim of sharing expertise/ knowledge mobilisation across the RIC to inform curriculum design and impact on learners was also highlighted.

> *The WPS [is about] promoting equity and outcomes for learners by shifting ownership of change through a culture of collaboration and empowerment. WPS [is] part of this by improving [the] Curriculum through this process.*
>
> *Lead officer*

A key theme was the view that the activity of the RIC should not duplicate the work of the local authority and should "deliver systems improvement or quality improvement greater than the local authority".

The aims of the WPS were viewed positively and respondents referred to the aims and objectives in terms of the three 'E's espoused by the WPS's strategic plan: Equality, Excellence and Empowerment. For some, the focus of the RIC was primarily seen in terms of raising attainment, while others commented on how the aims of developing collaboration across local authorities, sharing good practice and avoiding "reinventing the wheel" would support the raising of attainment. The three E`s relationship to learning and teaching and new ways of working to impact on children and young people (CYP) and 'moving the ownership of change' to practitioners were reoccurring themes. This practitioner empowerment was exemplified by highlighting the development of subject networks and the number of teachers engaging with these developments.

The importance of collaboration in regard to career long professional learning was also viewed as key to the work of WPS.

> *Collaboration seen as key to CLPL- both seen as cross-cutting processes for the RIC to effect systems change.*
>
> *Workstream member*

The Families and Communities Workstream interviewees were keen to stress that their

workstream aims were not just focussed on parental engagement/parents and families but the wider community.

> *..that I thought it was going to be around school improvement and schools. I'm always keen that we look broader than schools because schools can't do it on their own… so I was very keen that we, and certainly vocal, that we should be, it's not just about parents and families, it's about the wider community as well.*
>
> *Workstream member*

It was considered that the RIC had generally made progress in translating these aims into practice. The process of adapting workstream plans to suit reality saw leadership including elected members, board and others responding and communicating well. Given the complexity of the RIC and social and power dynamics involved, informants reported that relationships have worked well, and stakeholders had engaged with collaboration and RIC activity, developing strong networks (including HWB; STEM; Maths and CLPL groups).

Interviewees reported that there had been progress in the various aims of the WPS, but thought that the sheer size of the Partnership meant that it would take time for changes in practice to impact at school level and on learner outcomes. For example it was highlighted that reaching and impacting on the practice of teachers who might not yet be directly involved in the work of the RIC would take time and indicated that communicating the work of the workstreams to all teachers was important.

> *…but [I'm] sceptical about impact on teachers and schools. It was difficult to get messages out to teachers unless they were particularly involved in the RIC.*
>
> *Workstream member*

Some thought that the "political agenda" and wider debates around governance of the education system during the formation of the RICs had initially inhibited the pace of local authority collaboration at strategic levels. However, as the Partnership had developed, any tensions and competitiveness were largely addressed, which helped promote greater cohesion and buy-in across the local authorities. Relationships across the local authorities are now strong and continue to strengthen. This is a very positive feature of the WPS.

KEY POINTS:

- The main aims of the WPS were identified as promoting effective collaboration, supporting knowledge mobilisation and enhancing professional learning and practice. Furthermore, WPS aims to effect systems change and improvement which adds value to, rather than duplicates, local authority activity.
- Many described the WPS`s aims and objectives in terms of the three E`s: Equality, Excellence and Empowerment, in relation to attainment, impacts on learning and teaching and building collective capacity.
- Although there was still scope for more effective collaboration, mainly at local authority strategic level, most interviewees believed the WPS had made good progress putting its aims into practice.

4.2 ON FACTORS AND FEATURES WHICH ENABLED PROGRESS

A strong theme across the interviews was that the WPS had made good progress in establishing the networks and a supportive and inclusive culture, i.e., the infrastructure, for educational systems improvement across the constituent local authorities. Indeed, there was consensus that given the challenge of the scale of the RIC, the buy-in of directors and the "collective commitment to the Learning System"; the progress was impressive.

'Leadership' and 'ownership' were identified as key to developing the workstreams during their early phases. Setting out a "clear direction of travel" was highlighted as a key part of the process. Coordinating activity and building on already established partnerships were seen as key tasks for injecting pace into the workstreams. This was bolstered by having a motivated group of individuals involved in workstream activities, who had good relationships and worked well together. The various workstreams were seen as benefiting from practitioners increasingly seeing the value of the WPS activity for their work, which increased grassroots support and buy-in.

Where ES personnel were working closely with WPS teams, they were valued for their role in contributing a policy perspective, and research-informed insights to the work of groups/networks. They were also valued in being able to share what was happening elsewhere in other RICs with WPS colleagues. There was praise for the ES personnel working as an integral part of groups and providing specialist knowledge and resources and working with WPS teams to support individual or groups of schools. This input ranged from sharing national policy, signposting resources and best practice, and co-delivering and supporting WPS activities and events. Examples that highlight ES's support for the Partnership are detailed in Section 4.4.

Progress has been made in developing a collaborative culture and networks that were helping to promote a 'Learning System' that engendered evidence-informed, professional learning and helped to move knowledge around the Partnership. It was argued that this is the foundation for enhancing practice in schools. Building the capacity of key intermediaries across the WPS was seen as key to this and another example of progress. It was stressed the importance of such people and suggested that more could be recruited as well as looking to ensure the sustainability of this role. Relationships were reported to be very important in building the RIC and facilitating progress. This process had been strengthened during COVID -19.

A common theme across the interviews was that the impact of the WPS activity would take time to impact on learning and teaching in classrooms and result in positive learner outcomes.

Generally, interviewees thought such developments were at a 'tipping point' and there were more than 'green shoots'. Others were even more optimistic and highlighted that there was evidence of early success in professional learning in teachers, which had led to improvements in learning and teaching and impact in schools. In such cases, the WPS activity was enhancing or building on existing partnerships and professional learning activity in constituent local authorities. This included West Dunbartonshire's CAR networks, East Renfrewshire's SIPP activity and the assessment work in Glasgow, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde, subsequently joined by North and South Lanarkshire and East and West Dunbartonshire.

A cross-cutting success of the Partnership was the general sharing of practice, avoiding reinventing the wheel through drawing on knowledge and skills across the local authorities and has challenged thinking across authorities, shaping their planning and practice.

The WPS was seen as facilitating the growth of skilled and enthusiastic volunteers, encouraged by workstream leaders to develop innovative approaches. This, it was believed, had demonstrated the importance of facilitated networks for promoting and coordinating this activity and helping to spread the learning across the system. Again, informants stressed that longer-term, sustained impact at school/ learner level would take time given the Partnership's scale. Some interviewees also highlighted that in addition to working with ROC and ES, other helpful partnerships had been developed including those with other universities and colleges.

KEY POINTS:

- Good progress had been made in establishing the infrastructure for systems improvement through collaborative networks and culture, early buy-in from directors and a collective commitment to the Learning System.
- Early workstream progress was evident where there was strong leadership and a clear direction of travel.
- Relationships were seen as key to progress. These benefitted from building on or enhancing existing partnerships across the authorities, including those with ES.
- Interviewees recognised the importance of building capacity in key intermediaries in systems improvement in terms of success and sustainability.
- There was a clear recognition that impacts on learning and teaching and positive outcomes for children and young people takes time, but there were signs those were beginning to develop.

4.3 ON FACTORS AND FEATURES WHICH HINDERED PROGRESS

4.3.1 AT STRATEGIC LEVEL

A common theme, certainly at strategic levels, was that the WPS had taken time to establish awareness of purpose and objectives as well as the approach. These were developing aspects and it was acknowledged that the complex processes involved in systems change takes time. This was exacerbated by the challenge of the scale of the WPS and the diverse local contexts within each local authority.

This was a common explanation for the time it took to establish the concept and vision of the RIC across elected members and chief executives during the initial stages of its establishment. Forging collaboration between eight directors of education also took some time and most directors explicitly acknowledged the strong leadership exerted by the regional lead in this regard.

Four of the Leadership Workstream interviewees made specific comments regarding the governance of the Partnership. Those with experience of the Board, indicated that the Board's role had evolved over time. Interviewees agreed that, initially, the Board had invested too much time in operational matters though this had changed as lead officers were appointed and took up much of the operational load. This had freed the Board to concentrate more on strategic matters. Some thought that the range of strong personalities on the Board meant that, at times, decision-making could be complicated.

Similarly, at the time of data collection/interviews (July-September 2020), many of the Board interviewees saw ES`s role as needing to focus on providing more support directly to schools and classrooms and to work in a more integral way with colleagues across the Partnership. This contrasts with other interviewees who reported on the helpful and constructive support and input from ES personnel at operational level. (Section 4.2). ES interviewees themselves indicated that they were a new team who were not involved in the early developments of the WPS – "coming late to the party". There are indications that there is now increased coalescence between the views of the partnership and ES, as one ES interviewee suggested,

> *…would rather co-create the plans based on need and create a bespoke offer. There is a feeling that ES colleagues are 'ready to roll their sleeves up' and are looking for that opportunity.*

While there were reports of traction across the WPS and a developing awareness of its purpose and responsibilities, some strategic interviewees stressed that this had been uneven across and within local authorities and had taken time to establish. Some highlighted that it took time to identify appropriate key personnel and enlist their support across the workstreams.

While almost all strategic interviewees believed there were more than 'green shoots' of impact in terms of the strategic objectives, some thought that the pace of progress had slowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this situation was seen by many interviewees as having been a catalyst to drive the development of online and technology-enhanced methods to conduct the WPS's activity and led to significant developments such as expanding the online school across and beyond the Partnership (Section 5).

Some thought that, initially, communication with the Board could have been more efficient as the Board did not always seem to have the 'full picture' and more opportunities for workstream leaders to communicate informally and directly with the Board would help. One strategic interviewee believed that the senior officer role needed more autonomy, to adopt a "more independent, investigative, role with the local authorities", which would help break down barriers that existed [in some local authorities] and that hinder resources being shared.

Many of these challenges were seen as being overcome or ameliorated. However, there were some concerns raised by individual directors related to aspects of enhancing project management, the role of the senior officer and the evaluation of long-term impact on learners. These were thought to be ongoing considerations for the Board. [It is the researchers' understanding that the senior lead officer provided project coordination and management. In the beginning, this role had been supported by a policy officer, with access to other resources such as communications staff, but when the officer moved on, these were not replaced.]

These strategic issues are not uncommon in complex new `entities` or partnerships, where it takes time to establish trust and build successful relationships. The WPS originated out of the policy context and conditions set out in Section 2, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the Regional Improvement Leads in setting up and establishing individual RICs, within a relatively short space of time The WPS RIC has recently appointed a new Regional Lead (Chair of the Board), and in addition, a third senior lead officer has been appointed which potentially heralds a new dawn in the evolution of the WPS, in terms of leadership and culture.

4.3.2 AT OPERATIONAL LEVEL

No major hinderances to progress were reported by the interviewees, although there was a

common view that communications across the partnership or workstreams could have been further enhanced. Links between the workstreams could be strengthened. Broader or external communication issues were also raised in relation to teacher and school engagement.

Workload issues were also a concern. Some local authority staff involved in the workstreams were undertaking facilitation and/or attending partnership meetings in addition to their normal workload. While they were keen to continue to be involved and valued the professional learning and development of professional capital, they suggested that it might not be a sustainable model for the future. Interviewees reflected on feedback from local authority headteachers, including through the workload survey (LNCT), which indicated that the Partnership had created additional workload. However, there was a strong consensus that this had been a worthwhile investment given emerging and anticipated benefits.

There were few serious obstacles identified across the workstreams. However, changes to personnel and roles were seen as being disruptive, in terms of continuity (in workstream membership), and the time spent travelling to meetings was a concern for some. Again, the COVID-19 situation has promoted virtual meetings and more online activity should help to counterbalance this concern, assuming that the IT infrastructure is in place. It was stressed that online provision wouldn't always be suitable for some of their 'constituents', for a variety of reasons, including access and lack of familiarity in use.

Other difficulties included issues with the WPS website and staff being seconded on short-term contracts. One informant suggested that geographical spread could prevent schools from getting together, going on to suggest that venues could be rotated round the different authorities. One interviewee suggested that being a small authority meant having limited ability to send staff to events as there was few people to cover. But they still benefitted from other local authorities' initiatives.

Sections 4.2 and 4.4 indicate the contribution by ES to the WPS. Some in the local authorities were thought to be initially reluctant to work with ES as they were seen as having an 'official' accountability role, and individual officers didn't want to feel under scrutiny. Most interviewees believed that contribution varied from individual to individual and it took some time for the team to settle into their new roles.

In relation to the workstreams at operational level, as suggested previously, there were few major hinderances to progress. The issues that did exist tended to centre around communications, both internal and external and workloads, particularly for local authority staff supporting or facilitating workstreams, groups or networks. Other hinderances, where those existed, were mostly logistical, including time to travel and attend meetings outwith one`s own authority. The pandemic has changed this situation. Where informants mentioned the involvement of ES colleagues, it was largely in relation to the emerging nature of, and clarity about, `roles and responsibilities`. During the early stages of the Partnership, workstreams felt that they could not fully capitalise on the expertise and resources of ES.

In a similar vein to the Board Directors, the workstream interviewees thought that while COVID-19 had been disruptive, it had also brought positives in that it acted as a catalyst for developing innovative learning and teaching approaches and collaboration, as well as associated professional learning opportunities. The extended and enhanced use of online technology for communication had contributed to greater sharing of knowledge and support as well as facilitating larger networks. There are likely to be challenges in ensuring the coherence and monitoring of this activity. The surge in activity in the new workstreams is also placing increased demands on their leaders who will need support if this work is to be sustained.

KEY POINTS:

- Challenges to establishing the Partnership included investing the time to establish relationships, building consensus on the approach, purpose and vision and agreeing respective roles and responsibilities.
- Communication channels between the Board and workstreams could have been stronger with more opportunities for the workstream leads to communicate directly and informally with the Board.
- Communications were also raised as an issue at the operational level in two ways. One was between the workstreams, in that few interviewees knew what the other workstreams did and the other in external 'messaging' where interviewees felt that many teachers/ practitioners had not yet heard of the WPS.
- Workloads were raised as a concern by local authority officer interviewees, not in relation to 'hindering progress' but in sustaining partnership activity. This is also true of those who lead the ever-growing span of partnership networks that will require support for future activity.
- Logistics in terms of time to attend and travel to meetings were perceived by some to be a hinderance, although most believed that the increase in virtual meetings could overcome those problems and lead to more inclusivity.
- During the early stages of development it would have been helpful to have greater clarity over the roles and responsibilities of ES staff.
- IT was deemed to be an issue in some regards, where unreliable, it made it difficult to communicate and for some families and communities' access was problematic for various reasons.

4.4 ON WEST PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY AND IMPACTS

Positive developments within the RIC were found in all workstreams and included impacts upon individual/personal agency and professional capacity for practitioners and facilitators. This includes those activities delivered/co-delivered by ES. There were also some indications that workstream activity was starting to impact on learning and teaching in the classroom. The plans of the workstreams were impacted by COVID-19, but despite this, there have been positive adaption and progress.

4.4.1 WITHIN SCHOOLS

- **The Headteacher Mentoring Scheme**, supported headteachers by providing, for example, a retired headteacher mentor from outwith their local authority. Funding has been provided for headteacher mentors. Each authority could buy in a retired headteacher to work with either newly qualified headteachers or headteachers who perhaps required support. The Leadership Mentoring Scheme is implemented in four of the eight local authority areas supporting 15+ headteachers across the early years and primary sectors. This has continued virtually throughout pandemic and is supported by ES.

- I**mproving Our Classroom**, (building on Glasgow City Council work in this area) was highlighted as an impressive example of how digital officers have worked as volunteers and seen as a good example of how the Partnership has added value to the local authorities and fostered practitioner agency and empowerment. The roll-out of initiatives across local authorities, such as Improving our Classrooms, encompassed participation by 17 local authorities outwith the WPS.
- I**mprovement through empowerment**, the initial evaluative writing sessions were valued by practitioners, highlighting the impact of this initiative by ES. As such subsequent evaluative writing training was required and co-delivered by ES and a local authority officer to headteachers across different clusters of schools. This resulted in 150 members of staff from across the WPS taking part in Evaluative Writing sessions.
- **Evolving Systems Thinking** programme offered through ES in collaboration with the Partnership. Practitioners from all eight authorities participated in this programme.
- **Diversity training for probationers.** The Diversity Training Package offered to all local authorities for delivery including induction training for all new staff within each local authority, developed by the Partnership Diversity Officer.
- **Other examples of what has worked well** pointed to the number of headteachers who were taking on board the ownership of change through the Leadership Network to drive improvement.
- **Use of conferences** was largely seen as effective, e.g.: An "Empowered Primary Curriculum Leadership and Innovation" Conference and the "Early Learning and Childcare Festival". Both attracted hundreds of practitioners and received positive feedback for the WPS. Some of these were enabled by input to and support from ES, including joint activity in workstream links.
- **Some of the Headteacher interviewees** were clear about how their involvement in WPS activities/events had led to **impacts in learning and teaching practice** through innovative approaches to curriculum design, more and better use of Learning Rounds and Learning Sets and improvements in quality assurance and evaluative writing.

4.4.2 BETWEEN SCHOOLS

- **Moderation and Assessment activity** which had initially been shared between Glasgow City Council and East Renfrewshire, had been shared and facilitated through the work of WPS supported development officers, which had been expanded to four other local authorities. This demonstrates impact and increased the number of authorities implementing consistent models of assessment and moderation. Interviewees often commented on the effect on teachers' skills.
- **ES created a bespoke data session for Leaders** (Headteachers) in the RIC, which `gained traction` on social media.
- **Developing secondary curricular groups**, including additional support needs (ASN). The establishment of 60 local authority representatives on subject networks before the summer of 2020 was highlighted, as was the significant increase in the numbers of teachers involved in these subject specialist networks. ES were also involved in the development of the networks such as STEM, by supporting a culture of sharing practice and building on good practice. The curriculum networks are a key mechanism for the early success of this workstream.

- **The WPS had been responsible for a considerable number of headteachers visiting other schools and sharing improvement plans.** Headteachers had gone out and visited one another's schools and then came back to build on the skills that they had developed through evaluative writing. Castlemilk and Williamwood were often given as examples here of high schools sharing improvement planning and pedagogy.
- Initially, some issues cited regarding geography in getting to events etc. but the COVID-19 situation has **facilitated greater online participation** e.g. the Digital Literacy Group, was considered to be a good example of this and the work it was undertaking.
- The **CLN Workstream was seen as having traction** and had evolved to respond to the COVID-19 situation in addition to sharing the process of systems improvement across schools. This is covered in more detail in Appendix B.

4.4.3 BEYOND SCHOOLS

- The **Board has worked collaboratively** and been a great source of mutual support and advice for the directorate, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The **Family Learning Self-Evaluation Toolkit** was referred to constantly as 'a great piece of work'. This self-evaluation of partnership working with families and communities was developed by the Families and Communities Workstream and piloted in one local authority with a view to rolling-out to others.
- The **Learning Together and CLD events and Storyboard Development** and sharing of 20+ Storyboards showcasing interesting practice with families and communities.
- **Establishment of a CLD network** to raise the awareness of the role and opportunities for partnership working; a CLD conference was hosted with 80 in attendance.
- **Youth Voice and participation in the Partnership** is evidenced through some of the workstreams and events specifically aimed at and involving young people, for example, the Youth Voice event. There has been strong engagement with young people in the areas of health and wellbeing and curriculum focus on e.g. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). The Youth Ambassadors collected data from their own authorities to gauge the views of young people and gather examples of their recommended practice.
- **Development of social media,** the WPS has more than 3,500 Twitter followers and a substantial number of Twitter hits/downloads of blended learning papers and SWAY newsletters.
- **Webinars** have also been highlighted as successes.

Some of the impactful activity described above could of course be considered in more than one of these 'categories'. However, by using this ecology of equity it provides a useful reference point to consider the 'reach' of the Partnership. In addition, interviewees from ES and others indicated the national policy and practice perspective that ES brought to the WPS, as well as fostering a culture of collaboration, links to networks of professional contacts and insights from education experts and research.

In addition to interviewees stressing the importance of sustaining and embedding these initial successes, some highlighted the need for ongoing evaluation and monitoring for understanding the impact of the WPS. One interviewee stressed that while the use of critical indicators was important, these should be 'weighted' as Glasgow data can skew the overall picture. The need for appropriate qualitative indicators to provide corroborative evidence and insights on processes

was also stressed by strategic informants.

KEY POINTS:

- There are numerous examples to demonstrate the broad range of activity delivered by the WPS and partners, including ES, across different levels and aspects of the system.
- Many of the examples demonstrate how the Partnership activity is promoting a collaborative ethos and infrastructure, building agency and capacity within, between and beyond schools and implementing a range of innovative and valued resources and approaches across the Partnership.
- Interviewees suggested that it will be crucial for appropriate ongoing monitoring and evaluation activity to continue, that uses appropriate indicators such as illustrative qualitative evidence on process and factors for the Partnership to demonstrate impact from early and ongoing activity. This will also help to sustain and embed these successes and mobilise knowledge across the system.

4.5 ON WEST PARTNERSHIP CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

There was consensus that the RIC had added value to the local authorities and in some part, this was based on their capacity for collaboration. The collaborative learning approach and the partnership's focus on systems improvement had been well received across local authorities, with stakeholders recognising the benefits of learning from colleagues in other local authorities and partners more widely.

The Partnership had added value to the local authorities, schools and local authorities working together, particularly through the CLN Workstream and curriculum/subject networks and impact on demonstrated knowledge mobilisation and capacity building. In addition, internal evaluation feedback and insights from social media indicated growing awareness of the WPS and engagement with its various activities, particularly across school leaders and increasingly for teachers. Working collaboratively, increasingly through online approaches, and sharing knowledge and ideas across the local authorities was seen to have extended professional relationships and networks and promoted collective action. These networks of specialists and volunteers were reported to be driving developments that all the local authorities could benefit from. Here, the workstream leaders were reported to be neutral sources of support and advice who played a crucial role in facilitating networking and activity across the local authorities as the Partnership gained traction. Similarly, the network of facilitating officers from across the local authorities who supported the various events, conferences and sessions in each workstream was important for the initial progress of the Partnership. Their involvement also helped mobilise new ideas and knowledge across the local authorities.

The benefits to local authorities from efforts to promote effective networking and moving knowledge across the system are becoming clearer. Some highlighted the benefits emerging from:

- **Local authorities working systematically with one another**, including their central staff and increasingly colleagues in schools.

- The particular examples of **value-added to local authorities** echoes those given for general impact of the partnerships such as **developments of the networks for curriculum/ subjects, moderation and assessment and CLN and the relatively high numbers of teachers participating in these professional networks.**
- **Impact** on benchmarking, saving time on development activities, reducing duplication, supporting and sharing.
- The **Improving Our Classroom** was also seen as having gained traction recently and added value to local authorities. This programme of work, with its origins as a greater Glasgow City initiative, was reported to have a notable impact in other local authorities, such as in East Dunbartonshire where all primary schools have used it.
- The **CLPL conferences** were reported to have helped positively influence thinking and mindsets across local authorities, including reflecting the collaborative principles of the partnership.
- **Capacity building;** there is a growing a cadre of 'middle managers' and headteachers/depute headteachers across the Partnership with knowledge and experience of practitioner inquiry/collaborative action research. Increased personal agency and professional capital - confidence and shifts in thinking in CLN practitioner participants and positive impacts upon facilitators' learning.
- **Knowledge mobilisation** has taken place mainly through networking, sharing of information, practice and resources or materials: formal and informal contact and discussion, leading to a range of connections, with equivalent personnel in other authorities. Again, the role of key intermediaries, lead officers and facilitators has been instrumental here.

In addition, other Partnership activity indicates added value through filling a gap in the system, such as subject networks, which transcend local geographies and systems. Another interesting feature of this development is the growth and importance of skilled and enthusiastic volunteers. These developments, including sharing of expertise have also helped local authorities tackle the challenges of COVID-19. There was also a belief by some that "some types and strengths of collaboration would not have existed without the Partnership". This was mentioned in relation to the development of the CLD Managers sub-group and activity.

> *…whole COVID situation helping people with risk, we're helping each other with risk assessments, helping, well let's say systems of working, how we can move to a digital platform. Some of the barriers that some authorities were up against in terms of what they were allowed to use and what they weren't allowed to use. It certainly has helped them where appropriate, develop stronger arguments to advocate that they build a business case for getting access to things that they need access to.*
>
> *Workstream member*

Knowledge mobilisation was found to be partly dependent on the size of the local authority. Larger authorities had more staff with more specific remits, slowing the rate of spread of knowledge. To help overcome such issues, for example, an officer had begun to offer coaching and mentoring opportunities working in partnership with other local authorities and developing skill sets to take back to school. This officer also highlighted the work of a secondee who, through the Leadership Workstream, made connections with voluntary organisations and developed training packages for probationer teachers which were subsequently adopted by the eight local authorities.

There was a broad consensus that involvement in the WPS had led individuals to be more open-minded to learning from professionals in other authorities and to be more outward-looking in general, and a recognition that there was 'real buy-in' from other local authorities.

At local authority level, it was noted that headteachers and teachers would be key to implementing change and making an impact. Therefore, it was important to continue to work to engage with school leaders and practitioners to get meaningful involvement in the RIC's workstream activity and processes.

Interviewees generally believed that the WPS and the Leadership Workstream had added value to the work of local authorities. However, There was a sense of some repetition of local authority activity. For example, one workstream member reflected.

> *I wasn't sure that we needed a RIC to add value to the local authorities. There had always been conferences and ES events, [I have] been a headteacher for 17 years and the changes in what the [local authority] centre did was huge. They are still 'doing improvement' but might be better to have a root and branch approach.*
>
> *Workstream member*

There was an impression that it took a while at the beginning of the RIC to establish direct contacts within some local authorities and that early on there were some who were quite 'fixed in ideas' about professional learning and how it should be delivered. Conversely, some interviewees believed that their authority wasn't asked about what it needed or where the RIC could add value. This is not unusual of course, in terms of partnership working, where it takes time to build relationships and trust among individuals. Indications are now that the Partnership, particularly through the work of the lead officers, is seen as neutral and can be trusted.

KEY POINTS:

- Consensus that the work of the WPS had added value to the local authorities and in part this was dependent on the authorities` capacity for collaboration.
- The Partnership had been active, increasingly online, in sharing knowledge and ideas in extending professional relationships and networks and promoting collective action.
- Workstream lead officers were seen as key to driving development and providing a source of neutral support and advice. Similarly, local authority officers, particularly, at the start of the Partnership, were vital in facilitating and supporting the range of activities across the workstreams.
- More recently, the growing numbers of volunteers on, for example, subject networks have played an integral part in 'filling a gap in the system'.
- Capacity building has taken place through knowledge mobilisation and individual agency and professional capital. There is a growing cadre of 'middle managers' and head teachers/ depute headteachers versed in practitioner inquiry/collaborative action research.
- There was a recognition that at local authority level, it would be headteachers and teachers who will have the greatest impact on classroom change, therefore the WPS should continue to work with and engage them in workstream activity and processes.

4.6 ON THE WEST PARTNERSHIP'S LEARNING SYSTEM BUILDING COLLECTIVE AGENCY

Collective agency was developing but had not yet reached a critical mass that would accelerate improvement. It was also felt that collective agency had the potential to expand but had been supressed by the pandemic.

Those involved in the subject network forums saw them as being 're-engaged, refreshed and re-energised'. Learning from others was seen to have empowered headteachers and teachers and the Digital Literacy Group was given as an example of where collective agency was developing. The WPS was seen to have promoted the sharing of ideas across the system that had supported collective action, with interviewees reporting a growth of, and importance of, skilled and enthusiastic practitioner volunteers, encouraged by workstream leaders, in developing innovative approaches.

One theme across the interviewees stressed that a focus on leadership and building collaboration and agency rather than being competitive had fostered collective agency. Again, the CLN and Curriculum networks were highlighted as drivers for this process. The Castlemilk and Williamwood collaboration was often given as an example of schools working together, sharing Improvement Plans and ideas and contributing to collective agency.

The WPS`s approach to the development of a Learning System that focussed on data and evidence helped to promote collective agency and some believed that while the Learning System was fundamental to progress in the Partnership and local authorities, there needed to be a continued focus on promoting an understanding of this.

Most of those involved in the CLN believed collective agency was being built in the Workstream and could see visible changes in groups and particularly individuals` confidence, understanding, use of data and evidence and knowledge of practitioner inquiry. Although it was recognised that it was too early to point to accelerating improvement, some CLN interviewees did state that there was an impact on improvements in, for example, learning and teaching, promoting a democratic process in planning, a sense of 'ownership' and a 'common understanding of improvement'. We provide more details of this in Appendix B: A Focus on the Learning System.

In addition, the Families and Communities Workstream interviewees reported benefits of `powerful collaboration` and inclusion. Some also highlighted impacts on the individual agency of practitioners in relation to gaining a wider perspective, knowledge and understanding of what was happening in other authorities.

Informants from this workstream went on to detail how collective agency was being built through family learning activity, adapting and using the Self-Evaluation Toolkit, which was often given as an example. The use of Storyboard was given as an example of sharing the learning from WPS events, particularly around Learning Together. Another example given was the request from a local authority to 'do something' in Family Learning. which developed into a transitions project which started in March 2020, with four networks involved, and has grown rapidly.

Others focussed on specific examples of joint working between schools and/or between authorities or development of partnership workshops. There was also some indication that the COVID-19 pandemic had interrupted development in building collective agency.

KEY POINTS:

- There was a belief that collective agency was being built, but was not necessarily accelerating improvement yet, had the potential to expand, but had been inhibited by COVID-19.
- Collective agency promoted by a focus on leadership promoting collaboration and agency rather than competition.
- The WPS Learning System with its focus on the use of appropriate data/evidence was seen as helping to progressing collective agency and empowerment, but there needed to be a continual focus on promoting an understanding of it, especially as practitioners became involved in WPS activity. (More on this in Appendix B: A Focus on the Learning System).
- This question elicited the most varied comments from all the key research interview questions and perhaps suggests that some were unsure about what constituted ‘collective agency’.

5 COVID-19 AND BEYOND

5.1 THE WEST PARTNERSHIP'S RECOVERY PLAN

The WPS has collaboration at the heart of its vision, and this is manifested in all its activities. The pandemic was seen by the strategic interviewees to have provided an opportunity and impetus for the Board to develop a cohesive stance and responses in relation to issues associated with COVID-19. This was deemed to have been beneficial not only to the WPS, but also to the work of the individual local authorities.

Furthermore, the evolution and development of the various workstream networks and the importance of those leaders in facilitating this process during the pandemic has been very apparent in the interview responses. In addition, the WPS responded very quickly, by cancelling all professional learning events and activities. It was the first RIC in Scotland to do so. This allowed staff to focus on immediate priorities and for some seconded staff involved in WPS activities to return to their local authorities, to help deal with the impacts of COVID-19.

It also developed a one-year Recovery Strategic Plan (set within its 2019-2022 Plan, subsequently updated), to set out how it could best support practitioners and systems' leaders during and post COVID-19. This marks an evolution from the workstream structure to a more organic network-based approach. Within this network-based approach interviewees from the CLN Workstream suggested that the CAR process could be very beneficial for teachers and schools to tackle Recovery challenges. This highlights how WPS activity has helped local authorities and schools to deal with certain issues created by the pandemic by using collaborative approaches to share knowledge and evidence to inform their strategies.

Teachers were seen as requiring a "huge amount of support", especially during the early stages of the pandemic, but the situation had promoted collaboration, opened up classrooms and fostered greater levels of teachers working together within and between schools. Systematic as well as informal collaborative efforts led to significant learning and teaching developments. One such systems-level development that has gained increased traction was seen as the online school. The development of resources and skills regarding online learning had been accelerated. The WPS has been building up an online library and looking at ways to deliver high-quality online CLPL and this had received greater attention. There have been some digital infrastructure challenges for children and young people and teachers, such as the availability of digital devices and quality of internet connection. Nevertheless, this WPS initiative has been recognised as valuable across Scotland and other educational bodies, including other RICs, are now adopting the approach.

There was a temptation to 'protect' front-line practitioners. For example, some in local authorities had cautioned against "bothering the teachers at this time", but interviewees reported that practitioners were eager to communicate and found the support of the WPS networks and workstream leaders' input very helpful. Developments with COVID-19 had meant that some in the Leadership Workstream were being asked to provide professional learning opportunities for school leaders to respond to the challenges in dealing with the effects of the pandemic.

The WPS was seen as having added value to local authorities' response to COVID-19 and the efforts to co-ordinating activity by workstream leaders and others in key positions. Having access to expanded networks to share ideas and advice to help deal with the effects of the pandemic was highlighted.

Some colleagues in the local authorities and schools had been so focussed on recovery plans

and dealing with the challenges of COVID-19 that there had been little time for WPS activity. This was seen as a challenge. Several interviewees thought greater strategic guidance from the Scottish Government and ES would help. Respondents were keen to see the role of ES to be further integrated into localities, working with local teams to produce guidance and resources.

COVID-19 has been a challenge but has pushed forward many collaborative developments facilitated by technology. This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the increase and spread of its subject/specialist/inquiry networks and resulting innovation in online learning and sharing this practice across the Partnership. Phase 1 of these started in October 2019, these have now grown to over 20 curriculum networks, with approximately 2,000 members. The Assessment and Moderation Network (online portal) has seemed to work well with almost 1,000 practitioners involved, which has caught the attention of other RICs. This is being developed as a WPS model.

There was a broad consensus from the interviewees on the **Recovery** themes:

- **HWB of Children and Young People and Teachers**
- **Nurturing School**
- **Recovery Curriculum**
- **Blended Learning**
- **Learning Loss**
- **The Digital/Online Response to these Themes from the Partnership (through Collab8, Assessment & Moderation Portal and Online School)**
- **The Need to Support Headteachers/Teachers and Schools.**

Many of the responses from interviewees reiterated fears regarding the disruption to learning because of the pandemic and subsequent school closures. These fears and challenges were also expressed in the wider context of pupils` mental health, as well as the detrimental impact on staff and family members` health and wellbeing resulting from lockdown. Some also believed that certain age groups or types of learners could be `doubly` disadvantaged by this, citing those in early years and those with additional special needs. However, they also saw an opportunity for the WPS to respond to this by more online matching of learners and needs. In addition, there were concerns expressed over the potential for widening of the attainment gap. This is no surprise given that many of the interviews were conducted during the period of lockdown and while schools were preparing for part-time school attendance by pupils.

> *COVID-19 plans need to include leadership provision which supports headteachers to support schools. Headteacher Learning Sets should focus on difficulties facing them, and how they could be supported. Focus on health and wellbeing, issues facing CYP and the relevant curriculum. Could be considered through CLN and practitioner inquiry in own school. ES is already doing a lot in producing a wide range of resources.*
>
> *Workstream member*

As a result of COVID-19 more practitioners were said to be signing up for virtual subject networks. There was also mention of live learning, master classes and webinars that had developed in response to the pandemic.

Interviewees also spoke about the online school as “a fabulous idea”, a collective effort and a collective response but one that would require moderation to ensure quality. In addition, quality learning and teaching guides and parent ‘How to Guides’ were called for.

Is too early to evaluate the purpose, process and structure of the emerging networks. Preliminary information from the WPS suggests that practitioners were becoming involved because the networks provided a space for professional dialogue with others in the same subject area. There are also indications that practitioners outwith the Partnership’s geographic boundaries are getting involved too. While those numbers are currently small, it is a potential indication of the WPS filling a gap in the wider system, which transcends local geographies and systems and highlights the Partnership’s goals and collaborative ethos. Another interesting feature of this development is the growth and importance of skilled and enthusiastic volunteers, encouraged by workstream leaders, in developing innovative approaches:

> *Great example of how WPS adds value by promoting, coordinating this activity and helping to spread the learning across the system. Volunteer leads in the subject networks have impressed with their commitment and have helped develop and sustain key developments.*
>
> *WPS lead officer*

The role of facilitated volunteering has been highlighted as driving the development of the WPS online school, with digital officers volunteering to develop and support this work. This could be seen as a good example of how the WPS has added value to the local authorities and fostered practitioner agency and empowerment. But workstream leaders have been key to coordinating and monitoring this development. Similarly, the online school has captured interest nation-wide, with other RICs such as Tayside and South East joining with the WPS and other key stakeholders to roll-out on a national basis.

There was a different emphasis from the Families and Communities Workstream. Informants here point to the Transitions Project, who provided an important caveat regarding the rush to use online approaches. These interviewees reported that plans to support parents re transitions from September [2020] will look very different in different platforms and that online support might not be suitable for all their families who do not have equal access to IT. This was an issue that required attention by Scottish Government. One interviewee questioned if schools were "fit for purpose in this changing world" and stated that loss of learning was not just experienced in the school sector, but also in community learning and development.

Much of the Partnership activity has been galvanised as a result of the pandemic. This is a good example of how occupying a ‘unique space’ in the education system has catalysed an agile and flexible response to such a crisis. But it also reveals the potential fragility of that eco-system. For example, the calling back of seconded local authority CLN facilitators, those ‘reticulists’ who played a key role in the CLN process and in other workstreams. Similarly, those other key ‘boundary spanners’, the lead officers of the WPS, are in a vulnerable position due to also being secondees from the local authorities, rather than RIC employees, in addition to having a finite capacity to support the ever-growing activity of the WPS.

5.2 THE WEST PARTNERSHIP BEYOND COVID-19

Looking to the near future, interviewees held a variety of views on the priorities and plans that the WPS should focus on as well as hopes for the impact of the Partnership. Key themes included that in five years' time, the impact of the WPS work should be evident in learner outcomes and that high-quality, collaborative working should be embedded across the Partnership. In addition to the idea of system-wide improvement and impact was the need to have effective evaluation and monitoring in place to demonstrate this. This would include an emerging culture of collaborative inquiry and peer-evaluation that was supported by an ethos of trust and empowerment. The development of a collective identify across the RIC was also an aspiration for some interviewees. As evidence of effective practice emerged, some stressed the need for ensuring access to this knowledge across the RIC and beyond. This included online repositories and data bases of evidence-supported examples and guides.

The 'pre-COVID' WPS priorities were still regarded by some interviewees as important in moving forward. This included a continued focus on promoting literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, along with attention to learner and staff mental health. Other suggested themes addressing the future direction of the Partnership were more radical and included reflecting on the lessons learned from the pandemic to take a more critical look at the purposes of education within the broad aims of promoting equality, excellence and empowerment. This included a greater focus on family learning, the community and nurture facilitated, where appropriate by technology. It was also recognised that assessment and evaluation would have to be broader than simply measuring attainment, acknowledging the need to gauge confidence and soft skills. In February 2021 an interim action plan was presented to the Board. This plan highlights short-term priorities one year into the pandemic.

KEY POINTS:

- The WPS was seen as responding swiftly to the pandemic by cancelling all professional learning activities and events. It also developed a one-year Recovery Strategic Plan to set out how it could best support practitioners and systems` leaders during and post COVID-19. This included streamlining the Partnership's activity into three workstreams and facilitating a more network-based approach. This has created opportunities for knowledge mobilisation and empowerment, but faces challenges regarding the sustainability of innovation and networks.
- Systematic as well as informal collaborative efforts led to significant learning and teaching developments. One such systems-level development that has gained increased traction was seen as the online school and the development of a range of online resources in learning and teaching.
- Online support might not be suitable for some families who do not have equal access to IT. This was an issue that required attention from the Scottish Government.
- The WPS was seen as having added value to local authorities' response to COVID-19 through co- ordinating activity by workstream leaders and others in key positions. Enhancing access to expanded networks to share ideas and advice to help deal with the effects of the pandemic was also highlighted.
- Some local authorities and schools had been so focussed on recovery plans that there had been little time for WPS activity. This was seen as a challenge that some thought that greater strategic guidance from the Scottish Government and ES would help.
- Pre-COVID WPS priorities are still regarded as important in moving forward, including promoting literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, in addition to a focus on the mental health of staff.
- For some the disruption created by the pandemic presents an opportunity to take a more critical look at the purposes of education and assessment within the broad aims of promoting equality, excellence and empowerment, including how technology and a greater focus on family and community can address these aims.

6 CONCLUSION

As we highlighted at the beginning of the report, 'new approaches' were deployed by the Scottish Government as part of their reform agenda to 'strengthen the middle tier', and a major part of that was the implementation of the RICs. Clearly, the WPS RIC is still at an early stage in its development and it is recognised that impact on learners would take time. Nevertheless, the evidence of its influence and progress regarding its objectives to date is very encouraging.

6.1 KEY LEARNING AND CRITICAL REFLECTION

6.1.1 KEY CAPACTITIES

We have identified the main factors and features which have enabled the WPS and respective workstreams to progress its/their aims and objectives in Section 4. These included **strong leadership at the outset, a clear vision and direction of travel, building trust and a capacity for collaboration** (catalysing existing/previous partnerships/relationships), **a commitment to collaborative learning as a driver for improvement and the role and involvement of key intermediaries and committed individuals** across the strata of the Partnership.

The collaborative improvement strategies adopted by the WPS and the underpinning concepts and principles align with, and build on, a body of international research that confirms the value of school-to-school networking and cross-authority partnership work as key levers of innovation and system improvement (e.g. Chapman and Hadfield, 2010; Fullan, 2013; Wohlstetter et al., 2003). Another effective educational improvement strategy at the core of the WPS is partnership working, with school leaders collaborating with like-minded professionals. These partnerships act as levers of innovation and system improvement, working both within a local authority, or cross-authority (e.g. Fullan, 2013; Chapman et al., 2012; Chapman & Hadfield, 2010; Ainscow, 2016; Ainscow et al., 2012; Goodall, et al., 2005; and Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

We have also highlighted in Section 4, many other examples of 'achievements' or 'impactful' activities/practices, as described by those most closely associated with the WPS including **improvements in collective agency and professional capacity, professional learning, sharing resources and new ideas, and extending partnerships beyond schools to embrace family learning.** The external research team has also witnessed these developments when working closely to advise and support WPS colleagues as critical friends.

There are considerable challenges in bringing eight local authorities together to work within a collaborative framework, and this has been recognised in the interviewee comments; dealing with the complexities inherent in attempting to close the attainment gap and fostering collaboration amongst multiple stakeholders could be considered an achievement in itself. We suggest that, in part, this was made possible by the WPS occupying that unique or 'liminal' space in the education system, without being overly constrained by traditional structures or hierarchies. Although, to a great extent its progress and success dependent on, the commitment from, and collaboration with, those occupying such places in the system.

6.1.2 KEY CHALLENGES

While recognising the achievements of the WPS, the interviews have highlighted challenges during its development. These were identified in Section 4 and the main challenges can be summarised as:

- **Extending reach and impact within schools** – there is consensus that the WPS activities have yet to reach the majority of teachers or impact in the classroom, to any great extent. However, this is unsurprising given the time it takes for ideas to reach the classroom and be translated into demonstratable impact. Given the buy-in from headteachers/depute headteachers to collegiate events during the pandemic one would expect WPS activity to influence practice in schools.
- **Communications** – both internally and externally have been an issue. Internally, between the Board in relation to decision making and the lead officers and across the WPS. The majority of workstream members referred to a lack of knowledge or understanding of the activities of other workstreams. Externally, as stated, the majority believed that many classroom practitioners had not heard of the WPS.
- **Sustaining the eco-system** – as different types of networks grow across the WPS; this increases the scale and scope of the Partnership. Such upscaling could leave it vulnerable depending on the capacity and structure of the networks, particularly in the number of skilled facilitators and intermediaries available. Similarly, the workstream lead officers. have been key to coordinating developments, but as secondees from the local authorities, the eco-system could be exposed, if they were recalled. This highlights the need to think about building in sustainability to the Partnership's system at various levels.

6.2 KEY THEMES AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6.2.1 KEY THEMES

The evaluation framework was predicated on three research questions highlighted at the beginning of the report, each with their own sub-questions focussing on impact and processes involved:

1. How does the West Partnership RIC contribute to the work of the local authorities?
2. How does Education Scotland's RIT contribute to the WPS?
3. To what extent has the WPS RIC`s Learning System built collective agency to accelerate improvement?

Answers to the research questions posed demonstrate a clear belief, by most, that the WPS had contributed to the work of the local authorities, in many ways and has, in the main, provided professional learning and built capacity, which otherwise would not have existed. In addition, there is progression towards systems change, through, for example, volunteer-led subject networks, collaborative learning networks between schools and cross-authorities and a national model of an online school in development.

In terms of ES's contribution to the WPS, this solicited a more varied response, mainly across workstream interviewees. Where ES personnel were reported to be working closely with WPS groups in co-delivery or providing national policy perspectives or networks as in CLN, they were highly praised for their contribution and for what they brought to their co-facilitation role. (This is covered in more detail in Appendix B). ES staff believed they had made a significant contribution to the work of the WPS in several ways (outlined previously) but some thought that this could have been enhanced had they been involved more 'at the start' to co-produce plans and shape the offer accordingly.

In terms of developing collective agency to accelerate improvement. Some interviewees were clear about the concept of collective agency and how it had or could drive improvement, others referred to impacts on individual agency to the collaboration and activity which took place, whilst some interviewees mentioned joint working or collaborative activity. Most recognised that driving or accelerating improvement in collective agency took time. Given the variation of responses to this question, this has been included for consideration in Section 6.2.2 Key Issues.

The findings reveal that the WPS infrastructure is working well. The following highlights interrelated **key themes** across the findings that can be considered by those involved in strategic and operational aspects of the Partnership to inform their plans and activity to address challenges and sustain expansion and impact:

- **Building on the concepts, principles and practice of collaborative learning as a driver for improvement.** There is consensus that the principles and approaches of evidence-informed collaborative working have been largely understood and accepted and are influencing the culture of the WPS. Key factors in this have been the role of the Board in establishing the vision and objectives of the Partnership and the work of the CLN Workstream where the concepts of collaborative inquiry have extended across and informed the other workstreams. There was also evidence of a growth in collective agency as this collaborative process developed.
- **Developing an effective internal architecture for change.** The WPS has developed an appropriate and effective organisational structure to manage and execute its objectives. While the workstreams have been streamlined, these are seen as having progressed the planned activity and goals of the Partnership as stated in annual Regional Improvement Plans. The main features which have enabled this are leadership, planning, organisation and `ownership`, where this infrastructure was evident from the beginning, those workstreams appear to have developed more quickly. The role of lead officers has been pivotal to driving the WPS agenda forward. These officers have demonstrated strong reticulist abilities and have helped build others' capacity and skills which has extended, and enhanced networking focused on the Partnership`s objectives.
- **Knowledge mobilisation has taken place** mainly through networking, sharing of information, practice and resources or materials; formal and informal contact and discussion, leading to a range of connections, with equivalent personnel in other authorities. This has benefited the work of local authorities and again, the role of key intermediaries, lead officers and facilitators has been instrumental here. Building cross-authority partnerships and networks to tackle key challenges
- **Adding value through 'filling a gap in the system'**. This aspect of WPS activity is potentially best demonstrated through e.g. promoting subject networks, which transcend local geographies and systems. An interesting feature of this development is the growth and importance of skilled and enthusiastic volunteers that are both adding value to the local authorities, the wider RIC and now across the whole system. These developments, including sharing of expertise have also assisted local authorities in tackling the challenges of COVID-19.
- **Capacity building through a growing cadre of 'middle managers' and headteachers and depute headteachers** who are involved in driving improvement informed by their knowledge and experience of collaborative practitioner inquiry. There has also been

increased personal agency and professional capital with reported improvement in confidence and shifts in thinking for practitioners, particularly those involved in the CLN, in addition to positive impacts upon facilitators` learning. Cross-authority working has also provided a source of professional learning for local authority officers, including Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs).

- **Capturing learning and demonstrating impact**. Interviewees stressed the value of ongoing monitoring and evaluation activity. This includes the use of qualitative evidence and indicators as well as appropriate quantitative data to understand and demonstrate the impact on practitioners` agency and professional capital, in addition to successful outcomes for children and young people.

6.2.2 KEY ISSUES

We conclude by focusing on some key issues and implications for consideration by the WPS and its key stakeholders. Taken together the above reflections highlight that the WPS's approach is creating the conditions and processes for systems improvement and eventual learner attainment across participating local authorities. The impact of the WPS on the wider Scottish system is also evident, as is its role in supporting recovery across this system. While the WPS occupies, like other RICs, a unique space in the Scottish education system, it cannot deliver desired outcomes on its own. It can, as we have argued, enable and facilitate collaborative action and build collective agency. However, ultimately success will depend on a wide-spread genuine culture of collaboration. The Board has shown a clear focus on purpose, priorities, and impact since its inception. This has included a continuing commitment to building capacity and enhancing professional capital; features which are fundamental to a sustained Learning System and will be even more critical in developing a Networked Learning System.

Issue for consideration: Maintaining an emphasis on the Learning System to support evidence-informed activity and improvement planning and exploring ways of growing the system. This could also include a focus on the role of leadership in building collective agency as highlighted at the beginning of this section. Furthermore, building on the concept of a Learning System moving towards the idea of a Networked Learning System as outlined in the ICEA (2020) report would be a positive direction of travel.

It may be timely, as a new lead director of the WPS is in place to co-construct a shared set of expectations and protocols for ways of working and deepen the ethos and culture of collaborative governance and innovation between key stakeholders, such as ES and the eight local authorities.

Issue for consideration: Could greater clarification of roles and responsibilities be helpful? This could include advising on/developing workload models which recognise input to WPS activity, shared planning, and resources to build collective agency and maintaining emphasis on partnership working to impact classrooms and schools.

The report has stressed the importance of the boundary spanners or reticulists, (Section 4 and Appendix B) in building agency and professional capital across the WPS , which cannot be underestimated. Some of those, of course have been the Partnerships own personnel. However, many have been local authority `Improvement` staff, who in turn, have themselves greatly benefitted from connections made and collaborations with officers (and others), in different local authorities and with different players in the system such as ES and university staff. A repeated phrase, "there`s no point in reinventing the wheel", was a typical response in relation to such activity. This was not necessarily a cascade of knowledge, information, or

ideas, from large to small authorities, but learning from each other, where good practice was acknowledged or recognised. There were instances though where interviewees suggested that sharing was sometimes problematic. There is a need to shift the balance from sharing practice to move ideas, expertise and knowledge around the system towards high levels of joint practice development (Fielding et al., 2005) and the generation of new practices.

Issue for consideration: Recognising the key role of QIOs in the RIC. In addition, develop a shared understanding of the potential benefits of the economies of scale and scope in adopting a regional approach to quality improvement, which might mitigate against some of the challenges experienced in sharing practice and engaging in joint practice development.

One of the greatest challenges for the Partnership has been extending reach and impact within schools and as the evidence suggests this is not surprising, given the relatively short time frame in which it has been in existence.

Issue for consideration: Focusing on systematic approaches to `engagement` in the next phase of strategic planning e.g., analysis/classification of stakeholders and defining their interest. This could be beneficial in attracting and involving more teachers and other practitioners in all types of partnership activity, including workstream planning, discussion, and representation.

A finding that emerged from the research highlighted the importance of effective internal and external communications. The former is regarding vertical and horizontal internal communications. The latter has its basis in the previous point, in `getting the message out` to teachers and other practitioners.

Issue for consideration: Developing a communications strategy to enable more efficient internal working and to raise the profile of the partnership and spread understanding of the partnership 'offer' externally. This is linked to the previous issue and both may, in part, be progressed by the provision of additional support for senior lead officer role and lead officers. This could take the form of resources for programme/project management or coordination.

Section 5 COVID -19 and Beyond outlined some of the challenges inherent in a system dealing with the effects of a global pandemic. The WPS`s response to this was widely praised by many of the interviewees, in terms of speed of response and `recovery` activities. Although, there was an impression by some that it could be an opportunity for the Partnership to build on its brokerage role between different stakeholders and in certain sectors to optimise online learning provision and ensure quality of online resources.

Issue for consideration: The WPS and key stakeholders could continue exploring the potential of online provision to match learners with additional support needs and Early Years schools with similar learners/schools. In addition, those key stakeholders could continue to collaborate with the Partnership to explore innovative ways of breaching the IT divide for family and community learning.

Section 5 also highlighted the increasing scale and scope of partnership activity and a more

network-based approach. While there have been many demonstrable benefits and positives, not least of which is the rapidly increasing large number of volunteers signing-up for the Subject Networks and to produce online materials for West Online School. There is a potential issue with the sustainability of these developments.

Issue for consideration: Reviewing the need to build in sustainability to the Partnership's eco-system of groups and networks at every level where activity expands.

This is a point-in-time evaluation, a work in progress as the researchers are aware that many developments are taking place across the WPS, which are in line with the challenges and considerations cited here and will be reviewed in future evaluation.

Overall, the WPS may want to consider this process and impact evaluation as a milestone to reflect upon; to pause and reflect on the achievements and successes highlighted in this report. As yet the impact on the classroom will take time and remains to be evaluated; capturing the learning and demonstrating impact will require ongoing monitoring and evaluation activity, including the use of qualitative indicators to indicate impacts on practitioner's agency and professional capital.

The ultimate test will be the extent to which learner outcomes and other critical indicators, including reductions in the attainment gap, demonstrate progress across the WPS. However, the Partnership working across these authorities, the growing recognition of the importance of professional agency and capacity, the commitment to professional inquiry and the importance given to an evidence-informed approach, suggest that it will continue for some time in the future.

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APPENDIX A: RIC FUNCTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

RIC CORE FUNCTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

The Joint Steering Group (JSG) comprised of SG and COSLA representatives to take the RICs forward laid out several core functions of the RICs. However, the group made it clear that the way in which a RIC fulfils these core functions is very much a matter for individual RICs.

Core functions were:

- Produce a **Regional Improvement Plan** (originally on an annual basis, subsequently changed to a three-year plan with an annual review of performance) drawing on school and the local authority improvement plan and NI Plan.
- **Identify priorities for improvement** within the region (analysis of regional evidence and cognisance of NIF priorities).
- **Enhance and improve professional learning** for teachers, other professionals and key partners within the region.
- Put in place an appropriate **range of support, interventions and programmes**, including proportionate and tailored support to schools and early learning and childcare providers. In some instances, this may be 'light-touch' others may require more support or intervention.
- **Identify, promote and share good practice in learning, teaching and assessment** within and across regions, the basis of which should be peer-to-peer and school-to-school collaborative networks at all levels and including subject/sector specialisms.
- Support schools **to interpret and implement key educational developments** and insights from research.
- Ensure and enhance **subject-specific support and advice** across all eight curriculum areas focussing on literacy and numeracy and regional areas of improvement and attainment contribution.
- Facilitate access to **sector-specific support and advice** e.g. early learning or additional support for learning.
- Build capacity in **improvement methodology**; to include working with local authorities to ensure 'management of change' support is in place for schools.
- Adopt a **regional approach to supporting staffing challenges**, this would include a shared approach to capacity building, including recruitment and retention.
- **Support wider collaborative working**, with local authorities and others e.g. in education, health, social work and Community Planning Partners across the system, to deliver improvement for every child. (JSG Report 2017)

Individual RICs could decide their staff deployment model to ensure that they were able to deliver on their core functions and agreed priorities. It was recognised that each RIC would have different starting points and ways to deliver core functions and priorities. Part of this approach would be testing new ways of working to deliver impact on improvement. It would not be a one size fits all approach; recognising that what works in one area may not work in another; flexibility and variation was required. Once plans were in place, it was imperative that the landscape was clarified and simplified to avoid any confusion, particularly for headteachers and other professionals, about who was offering what between the RIC and the local authorities. Each RIC's plans ought to reflect the priorities developed by the RIC, which in turn would have different workstreams and activities. In

addition to the key principles outlined previously, each RIC was expected to demonstrate sufficient flexibility to take account of local needs.

RIC GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Scottish Government laid out principles to be incorporated into every Regional Improvement Plan (RIP). These were:

- **Flexibility** – to ensure the RIP reflected the needs and improvement priorities of the schools they supported.
- **Functionality** – the plan should reflect the core functions set out in the JSG Report, recognising that it may take time for each RIC to incorporate all the functions, but over time they should.
- **Evidence-based** – this should include detailed analysis of educational performance data, in addition to data from other key sources such as health, social justice and community planning.
- **Clarity of Information and Purpose** – to include how schools and headteachers can access support for improvement from the RIC, the local authorities and other specialists.
- **Continuous Improvement** – in support for curriculum design and development, including literacy and numeracy, STEM, 1 and 2 Languages, DYW and the Learner Journey.
- I**mprovement/Theory of Change/Change Model** – should be underpinning approach.
- I**mpact and Measuring Progress** – clarify how this will be done.
- **Design** – the plan should be based on needs and improvement priorities of schools.
- **Engagement** – should outline contribution made by parents, communities, the third sector and young people.
- **Delivery** – should show how the priorities will be delivered and what the professional learning will be.
- S**ubject Specific Support and Advice** – should be offered across all eight curriculum areas e.g. through networks of teachers.

APPENDIX B: A FOCUS ON THE LEARNING SYSTEM

BUILDING A LEARNING SYSTEM

At the inception of the West Partnership (WPS) RIC the ROC team worked with senior WPS colleagues to co-develop the concept of a Learning System as the mechanism for driving improvement at all levels across the Partnership. This was intended to be the high-level strategic and aspirational model for professional learning to drive system improvement.

The Learning System is characterised by an approach to collaboration that is underpinned by a considerable body of national and international research which demonstrates the positive benefits and impacts of collaborative inquiry approaches, resulting in improved outcomes for children and young people, (Chapman, C. and Hadfield, M., 2010, Ainscow, M. et al., 2012, Donaldson, G., 2012, Fullan, M., 2013, Chapman, C., et al., 2015). Some of those intended outcomes can be summarised, but not limited to, as: improvements in learning and teaching; increases in learner engagement and motivation; development in professional capacity; and strengthening of leadership at all levels of the system.

The following are a set of key principles rather than a blueprint, recipe or one size fits all approach to improvement that underpin the WPS's Learning System. The agreed principles were:

All can learn and achieve – Irrespective of their starting point.

- Learning is outcome focussed – Innovation and improvement are the core goals.
- Learning occurs at all levels – Within a nested system.
- Everyone has something to learn – Reciprocity and respect.
- Learning is underpinned by systematic collaborative inquiry – Inquiry and evidence are key.

and

- Learning takes a critical but action-orientated stance – Critical perspectives and change support development.

In addition to the above principles, the ROC team worked with colleagues to develop and agree a set of characteristics or features that would underpin the RIC's Learning System. These are:

- Learning Systems use 'Learning Partnerships' to drive equitable improvement across the system.
- Learning Partnerships use evidence to identify key challenges, experiment with innovative practices and monitor developments and impact of changes.
- Learning Partnerships promote formal and informal opportunities for distributed leadership at all levels and are created alongside the professional learning of staff at all levels.
- Planning for collaboration encompasses the development of arrangements to support long-term collaboration and new approaches to capacity building.
- Strategic improvement planning in schools and within and across local authorities is explicitly linked to Learning Partnership activity.

and

- Learning Partners are diverse and include schools, local authorities, Education Scotland, and other agencies.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING NETWORKS (CLN) – DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The most visible demonstration of the Learning System can be seen through the Partnership`s Collaborative Learning Networks (CLN), and more recently the collaborative networks. The CLN are 'learning partnerships' between practitioners, from different schools, across different local authorities working collaboratively with key partners from the local authorities, such as Quality Improvement Officers, (QIO`s) Educational Psychologists and the Education Scotland Regional Improvement Team, (ES RIT).

PURPOSE AND AIMS OF CLN

The main purpose of the WPS CLN was to foster high-level successful sustainable collaboration at all system levels and build leadership capacity to take forward improvements by effective collaborative working. The aims of the CLN focus on capacity building in practitioners, namely in increasing confidence in the use of inquiry skills to measure the impact of interventions and developing a critical mass of those to promote collaborative methods within and across schools. In addition, the CLN sought to create a sustainable model of collaborative learning across schools and create a culture of empowerment at all levels. In doing this, the CLN would grow the capacity of the system to promote improvements in outcomes for children and young people with the aim of training most WPS practitioners in the collaborative process by 2025.

CLN MODEL AND PROCESS

The CLN of the WPS drew on the key principles and model developed in the Schools Improvement Partnership (SIPP) initiative, that used Collaborative Action Research (CAR) which involves teachers working together in and across schools, using systematic practitioner inquiry to: critically examine existing situations; develop changes to practice based on evidence, monitor the impact of these changes and build the lessons learned into practice and planning. CAR is an overarching framework drawing on a range of research methods as appropriate, to answer schools inquiry questions.

The CLN model of support differed from that used by the SIPP initiative and subsequent Network for Social and Educational Equity (NSEE) programme; in that the version adopted by the CLN brought practitioners and their advisers together at regular regional events to plan and discuss progress, rather than working at school network level. These professional learning events are detailed in Table 2.

This reflects the scale of the WPS's CLN operation and marked a new way of facilitating collaborative inquiry at scale. While this approach does not have the benefit of a dedicated team 'working on the ground' visiting school networks to support collaborative inquiry teams, it has proven successful in using events to convey the vision and principles of the CLN process and provide essential technical input on collaborative inquiry design, methods and analysis techniques. The role of the facilitators recruited from local authority advisers and ES specialists are then key to providing advice and support for the various inquiry teams between the events and ensuring the momentum of the respective inquiry projects. This was also a key area of activity for the ROC team who provided support for the networks and facilitator training and general capacity building in the development of understanding of research and inquiry techniques and the use of data to inform decision-making. In addition, ongoing formative evaluation was undertaken by the team to provide timely observations and insights on the process to the lead officer.

One of the characteristics of successful collaboration, cited in Ainscow (2016) is "*providing*

structured opportunities for collaboration, including investing in time and space to build positive relationships". This was evident throughout the professional learning events in both CLN Cohorts 1 and 2, in that practitioners welcomed that time, space and place, in that they were outwith their own school environment and had the time and opportunity to engage in professional dialogue with their peers. In addition, a key characteristic in the success and sustainability of collaborative working and is especially true of the CLN, is the role of the 'reticulist', key intermediary or 'boundary-spanner'.

> *Boundary-spanners and reticulists are able to play a number of different roles to establish, facilitate and co-ordinate collaboration. Their communication and networking skills equip them to act as a link person between putative partners at the beginnings of collaboration. Combining these skills with their organisational and negotiating abilities means that they are able to manage collaborative action at different stages, for example acting as a project manager during the initial phase of partnership creation or developing transitions into new collaborations at the end of a time-limited initiative (*Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002).

The ambition of the WPS CLN Workstream was that two CLN would be launched annually, with each one comprising a minimum of 40 Early Learning Centre (ELC) establishments or schools from across the region. Each cohort would have at least two sectors represented, and each local authority would provide one key facilitator for up to ten schools that participate. Each school would be required to nominate one promoted member of staff and one practitioner, to promote leadership buy-in and support and foster distributed leadership and empowerment. Each establishment would collaborate with other establishments to implement a Collaborative Learning Project, (CLP) that focused on a shared challenge identified from their data and professional insight. There would be a maximum of 100 participants per cohort to be matched into eight collaborative learning teams. The WPS CLN helped to foster collaboration between schools through a matching exercise; educational establishments with common interests, firstly by gathering intelligence via a survey and then at a matching event. In addition, professional learning events would be provided to deepen understanding of professional inquiry, with key facilitators provided to nurture each team. CLN Cohort 1 was launched in May 2019, with a view to completion by May 2020 and Cohort 2 was launched in September 2019, with a view to completion by June 2020. Success would be celebrated at a final sharing event in June 2020.

The RIC facilitates the development of learning partnerships across schools and local authorities and we have seen in the substantive report the various ways in which it has progressed that capacity building. The CLN are a prime example of this; 115 practitioners from 54 ELCs, primary and secondary schools across eight local authorities participated in the CLN, with 17 CLP, covering a range of foci: literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, pupil, parental and community engagement, transitions and resilience. These all had particular nuances e.g. one was on pupil-led active learning and another on strategies to improve extended writing in technologies. One CLP took a 'whole school approach' considering collaborative professional inquiry systems.

CRITICAL REFLECTION...ON PROCESS

Our findings suggest that leadership, planning, organisation, and structure of the CLN professional learning events and design of the programme were the main factors in the process working well. Key to this was the leadership, commitment and enthusiasm demonstrated by the workstream lead officer:

> *…leadership ability…quite outstanding. Lead learner approach, significant degree of expectations, energised and energising…* CLN Facilitator

This was supported by a strategic commitment and 'push' by the CLN Workstream sponsor. The process also benefitted by investment from school/establishment leaders in terms of time and commitment, (their own) and in releasing staff to participate. In turn, practitioners were (in the main) engaged in the process, showing enthusiasm and motivation.

The programme also included presentations from partners and stakeholders, e.g. educational psychologists, and establishment practitioners with experience of collaborative inquiry. These were particularly well-received by participants.

> *I thought the structure of the training days worked particularly well, in having the large group days, with elements of research `training` to upskill staff and then having the small group approach .* CLN Facilitator

CRITICAL REFLECTION… ON PRACTITIONER PARTICIPANTS: INDIVIDUAL AGENCY AND PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL

The CLN Workstream had a clear number of aims to measure impact against; these in sum related to numbers of participants engaging in the process, reporting on an increased confidence in using inquiry skills, developing a critical number of practitioners with the capacity to promote high quality collaborative methods within and across schools, a sustainable model which did the same and creating a culture of empowerment at all levels to promote collective responsibility and to bring about improvement in learning experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

It is very unfortunate that the COVID-19 pandemic meant that all of the CLN cohorts could not complete their research projects at time of writing and assessment or evaluation of the CLN in that framework could not be undertaken. However, the ROC researchers feel confident that through their involvement from the inception of the CLN cohorts and in providing support for those learning partnerships as well as emerging outputs from the respective inquiry projects, that several significant observations can be made.

These relate, in the main, to impacts upon individual agency and professional capital. There are essentially three types of individual agency, which can be demonstrated in personal agency, co-agency, and collective agency. Personal agency is demonstrated through self-regulation and self-efficacy within a social context and understanding and awareness of how to achieve one's goals. In some situations, others play a pivotal role in supporting individual agency, because they lack the power or influence to achieve their desired outcomes on their own, which is referred to as co-agency. Bandura (2000) and many others point to the concept of collective agency as a means of pooling knowledge, skills, and resources for a common goal or purpose to influence, change or shape social structures in the future.

Hargreaves and Fullan, (2012) indicate that professional capital encompasses human, social, and decisional capital. These are interdependent and used by educational professionals for the purpose of carrying out the complex and demanding work of teaching and learning. All three of these forms depend on relationships between individuals and communities.

> *In a similar vein to the ideas that underpin the concept of professional capital, research has also demonstrated that the collective ability of teachers to affect change is influenced by the knowledge, expertise and resources embedded in their social relations and social structures (*Chapman et al., 2016).

These largely relate to changes in individual/ personal agency and professional capacity, in relation to attitudes, behaviours, capabilities and skills. The researchers have observed that social learning took place in Cohorts 1 and 2.

Knowledge acquisition took place in terms of exposure to different professional practice and research methods, in addition to research skills such as data collection, measurement and analysis. The participants themselves reported a better use of data.

Professional agency has developed by practitioners engaging with collaboration through professional inquiry in learning partnerships and in some, collective agency through head teachers/Senior Leadership Team (SLT) taking a 'whole school' approach.

It has not been possible, due to the pandemic, to consider outcomes in terms of effects upon the children and young people who were involved in the inquiry approach. However, participants referred to improvements in their teaching practice and positive effects upon their learners, pre-lockdown. This was also reported by some of the facilitators.

> *CLN has been beneficial, schools have kept relationships going, there has been a mix of establishments involved, e.g. schools in affluent areas learning from schools in poor areas…CLN has had an impact on learning and teaching in the classroom e.g. in numeracy development*. CLN Facilitator

One key feature of the WPS approach to developing the CLN was to promote empowerment in that the CLP had to have the commitment from a headteacher or from someone in the SLT, who had to accompany the classroom practitioner to some of the events. In addition, they also had to demonstrate commitment by dedicating time for that practitioner to attend events.

Where participants withdrew, and those were in the minority (and mainly from the secondary sector), this was largely due to time factors and competing priorities. Although the common reasons were logistical: timetable clashes; time to attend the training events and geographic challenges in getting to the venue, (re travel time). An additional constraint to participation and engagement was a lack of commitment and or support from the headteacher/SLT. This manifested in a delay in `nailing down` an inquiry question because the senior leader wasn't present to discuss or agree it and/or a lack of support to attend the learning events. One CLN facilitator commented:

> *If there was no clear commitment from headteacher/senior management, then [this] proved to be detrimental to progress, as individuals couldn't make decisions, they had to go back and check with them.*

It is not yet possible to say conclusively whether the extent to which the degree of co-agency in the learning partnerships enabled or constrained personal practitioner agency, however, those practitioners who appeared to have the commitment and support of their senior leaders, seemed to more fully demonstrate increased individual agency. This was observed through an overall increase in confidence and involvement in inquiry planning and implementation. Although, this may not have been necessarily directly attributable to support from leaders.

Delays in time taken to develop an inquiry question was not wholly attributable to lack of senior leadership agreement, some partnerships found it difficult to identify a question due to a number of variables, such as group differences and dynamics, but also because of a lack of experience in CAR or collaborative inquiry approaches, or the initial complexity of their inquiry focus. The

'language of inquiry' was also highlighted by facilitators as a possible constraint, due to its unfamiliarity. Indeed the support from the ROC team, facilitators and educational psychologists was often most intense during the initial stages of the CLN activity and helped teams refine their inquiry question and identify methods that would be appropriate to obtain the most relevant evidence.

Overall, the key features of individual practitioner development were a demonstrable difference in the participants in terms of confidence and shifts in thinking, not only towards learning and teaching relationships, as opposed to subject areas, but in challenging and changing 'fixed' assumptions. The importance of 'mindsets' is something that featured in our findings in that it sometimes appeared to be an obstacle to progress.

> *The main hindrance was the perception of practitioners – 'getting things wrong'. They want a positive impact so [were] worried about this, so had to be reassured that they just need a clear way forward.* CLN Facilitator

CRITICAL REFLECTION ... ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES: PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL AND AGENCY

The contribution and participation of local authority staff have been pivotal to the success of the CLN cohorts, both in terms of representational leadership on the workstream, and particularly through the QIOs and educational psychologists facilitating the learning partnerships through the key collaborative inquiry processes of investigation, planning, implementing and reporting. Their roles covered four broad areas of organisation, facilitation, recording and networking. The professional knowledge and specialisms of the facilitators were often also very valuable to the inquiry groups when developing their projects. This was also true of the ES staff who co-facilitated the learning partnerships. Their knowledge of the system and specialisms was helpful to many of the inquiry teams, especially when formulating their project ideas and identifying criteria for success.

Our findings from the evaluation fieldwork suggest that individual participants were not the only practitioners to benefit from involvement in the WPS CLN. This is also true of the local authority staff themselves, who reported a range of positive impacts upon their knowledge, understanding and skills in collaborative inquiry. The facilitators had a range of experience in this approach, some with significant years of experience, (some had been involved in the SIPP), in e.g. leading it in their authority and others, who had no experience at all. However, there were demonstrable benefits for both types; the former gained more confidence to act as advocates of the process, and in some cases, took back to `pull other schools in the authority along' and the latter had the confidence to try it in different contexts in their authority.

Those impacts are not confined to the inquiry process though, the facilitators experience on the CLN illustrate a number of other 'knowledge mobilisation' features of participation, in that direct contact and discussion, both formal and informal, led to a range of connections, with equivalent personnel in other authorities to share practice and also connections to other networks e.g. Psychological Services and ROC.

CONCLUSION

Even although the pandemic halted CLN activity, there are many positives to be taken from the experience both in impacts on practitioners and their practice and on individual agency and professional capital. This is also true for the facilitators involved. These benefits would not have been accrued without the commitment, motivation and enthusiasm of the participants and

investment from senior leaders. Interviewees were very clear about how important the leadership of the lead officer was in making the CLN successful; citing planning, organisation and structure of the learning programme. The key intermediaries were also vital to its success.

There were no major hindrances to progress, where those existed, they tended to be logistical: time to travel to sessions and geographic constraints. The minority of practitioners, lacked agency, where their senior leader was not present to make decisions re developing an inquiry question.

Connections made and relationships built through participation in the CLN are still continuing for both participants in, and facilitators of, the programme.

COVID-19 RECOVERY

In addition to the CLN final sharing events a Learning for Leadership programme launch had been scheduled for June 2020 and this was also halted. Practitioners from both cohorts were offered online support to complete their projects. However, being committed to a research-led inquiry approach to bring about positive outcomes for children and young people, the CLN Workstream put out an offer to practitioners to join online inquiry groups for support during the crisis This resulted in three Inquiry Groups from the primary and secondary sectors, in addition to Homelink workers. These groups were supported by the lead officer and ROC. This inquiry model has informed the development of the partnership`s recent approach to collaborative learning, encapsulating the principles and characteristics of the learning system described at the start and being embedded across the three WPS Workstreams.

Table 2: Professional Learning Programme

Key Features	Purpose	Input
1. a) Launch b) Digital Survey	Introduction to CLN, including sharing a common understanding of CLN and typology of collaboration and sharing of expectations from involvement. To find out where common interests lie to match schools.	Invited speakers – academics and practitioners to share experiences. Workstream Sponsor (WS) and Lead Officer (WLO) Representatives of main partners and stakeholders.
2. Collaborative Networking - Matching Event	To match educational establishments into CL Teams and developing a 'hunch' into an inquiry question.	WLO Presenters Facilitators: ES, QIOs, Ed.Psychs. ROC Advisers
3. Professional Learning Event – Inquiry Question	To be supported in developing a quality inquiry question.	WLO Presenters Facilitators: ES, QIOs, Ed. Psychs. ROC Advisers
4. Professional Learning Event – Measuring Impact	To learn about and share different ways of measuring data – quantitative and qualitative. To develop a data collection plan.	WLO Presenters Facilitators: ES, QIOs Ed. Psychs. ROC Advisers
5. Professional Learning Event – Direct Observation Strategies	To learn how to implement direct observation strategies such as Lesson Study.	WLO Presenters Facilitators: ES, QIOs Ed. Psychs. ROC Advisers
6. Final Event – Sharing Event	To share experiences, lessons learned and impact of interventions.	WLO Facilitators: ES, QIOs Ed. Psychs. ROC Advisers

Key:
Ed. Psychs. – Educational Psychologists
ES – Education Scotland
QIOs – Quality Improvement Officers
ROC Advisers – Robert Owen Centre Advisers
WLO – Workstream Lead Officer