

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL  
AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 June 2021

Report by Clerk

NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR  
YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To provide information on the Audit Scotland report *Improving Outcomes for Young People Through School Education*.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. It is recommended that the Committee considers the report.

**BACKGROUND**

3. A copy of the Audit Scotland report [Improving Outcomes for Young People Through School Education](#), published in March 2021, has already been circulated to all Audit and Scrutiny Committee Members. Under the Committee's specialisation arrangements, the Members leading the review of this particular report are Councillor McLean and Councillor Swift. The Director of Education has provided comments on that report and a copy of those comments is attached (see Appendix A).

**RECOMMENDATION**

4. It is recommended that the Committee considers the report.

Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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Background Papers:-

1. Audit Scotland Report *Improving Outcomes for Young People Through School Education*

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL  
AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 JUNE 2021

Report by Director of Education

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION:  
ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT POSITION IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to apprise the committee of the assessment against the recommendations made in the 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' Accounts Commission report prepared by Audit Scotland.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that members of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the assessment of current practice within East Renfrewshire to improve outcomes for young people and actions being taken by the Education Department to drive further improvement.

## **BACKGROUND**

3. In March 2021 Audit Scotland published the 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' report on behalf of the Accounts Commission, following their audit work to look at how effectively the Scottish Government, councils and their partners were improving outcomes for young people through school education.

4. Audit Scotland commenced its work in 2019 considering its review of improving outcomes in the context of primary and secondary schools. This work was paused in March 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic and was restarted in October 2020 to look at the impact of Covid-19 on school education and the response taken by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners. The Audit Scotland report recognises that this is a fast-changing situation and only covers actions taken by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners up until early January 2021.

5. There is strong evidence in East Renfrewshire of Education's relentless focus to deliver excellence and equity for all its learners and the impact of this resulting in improved outcomes. This is intrinsic in executing the department's vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*.

6. Reports at Education Committee highlight key areas that the department consider fundamental in its intent to continually improve outcomes for children and young people through their school education, and importantly to succeed in learning, life and work. Recent reports include Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) at the April 2021 committee, The Quality of Remote Learning at the March 2021 committee and the department's Standards and Quality Report (2019 - 2020) and Local Improvement Plan (2021 - 2024) at the committee in January 2021.

## REPORT

7. The key messages in the 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' report are:

- 'School education is not just about exam results. It also aims to improve children's and young people's health and wellbeing and support wider outcomes such as vocational qualifications. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected children and young people in many ways, including their learning, wellbeing and economic circumstances. Pupils living in the most challenging circumstances have been most affected by school closures.
- Those involved in planning, delivering and supporting school education were working well together prior to the pandemic. This strong foundation helped them to collaborate to deliver a rapid response to Covid-19 in exceptionally challenging circumstances. The pandemic has reinforced the importance of school education and other sectors working together to tackle issues which affect young people's life chances and outcomes, such as child poverty and health and wellbeing.
- Both national education policy and the curriculum reflect the importance for pupils of different pathways and opportunities, and outcomes beyond exam results. There has been an increase in the types of opportunities, awards and qualifications available to children and young people and an increase in the number awarded. However, better data is needed to understand if other outcomes, like wellbeing and confidence, are improving.
- There is wide variation in education performance across councils, with evidence of worsening performance on some indicators in some councils. At the national level, exam performance and other attainment measures have improved. But the rate of improvement up until 2018–19 has been inconsistent across different measures. Measuring progress has been hampered by the cancellation of exams and other data gaps caused by Covid-19. This could create risks around accountability.
- The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Progress on closing the gap has been limited and falls short of the Scottish Government's aims. Improvement needs to happen more quickly and there needs to be greater consistency across the country. The government and councils recognise that addressing inequalities must be at the heart of the response to Covid-19, longer-term recovery and improving education.
- Council spending on primary and secondary school education across Scotland increased by 5.1 per cent in real terms between 2013/14 and 2018/19, from £4.1 billion to £4.3 billion. Most of the real-terms increase in spend can be attributed to the Attainment Scotland Fund, which the Scottish Government set up in 2015/16 to close the poverty-related attainment gap. When this is excluded, real-terms spending increased by 0.7 per cent during the period, to just over £4.1 billion. The Scottish Government had put over £200 million of extra money into Covid-19 mitigation measures and education recovery by early January 2021.'

8. The report focuses on attainment before the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and compares performance across council areas, including the gaps between pupils residing in the least and most advantaged areas in examining the poverty related attainment gap.

9. In the broad general education the report examines the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) in literacy and numeracy across the primary and secondary sector. In the senior phase of secondary, the report examines four key indicators: percentage of school leavers achieving one award or more at Level 5 or better; those achieving five awards or more at Level 5 or better; those achieving Level 4 literacy and numeracy; and the percentage of 16 to 19-year-olds participating in education employment or training. The data

used in the report is from a baseline of 2013/14 to 2018/19, except for ACEL attainment where the baseline is from 2016/17, the first year such data at authority level was published by the Scottish Government.

10. In arriving at their conclusions of performance across Scotland, Audit Scotland made a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government, councils and Education Scotland to work together to take forward, where appropriate, within the context of a collaborative system. There are specific recommendations for partners and joint recommendations. These are included in the report.

11. The Audit Scotland analysis shows that East Renfrewshire performs well and from a very high base as evidenced in the report. However the department is not complacent and *Appendix 1* provides the Education Department's assessment of its current position against the recommendations councils are to take forward; and demonstrates current strength and intent to further improve.

12. As noted the thrust of the key messages and recommendations in the Audit Scotland publication are considered to present no difficulty for the department or the Council. During 2020-21 Education Committee has considered a number of papers and presentations concerning the response to Covid-19; in addition there are regular reports on performance and standards at authority level and in our schools. Whilst shunning complacency, East Renfrewshire has operated and led developments in a number of these areas over the years or already has taken action to address more recent recommendations heightened as a consequence of Covid-19.

13. Fundamental to East Renfrewshire's ambition that all children and young people flourish in education and beyond is the effective use of performance information and the interventions and supports necessary to raise the bar in terms of attainment and achievement for all children and young people. In doing so extra focus is placed on closing gaps for any and all groups of learners. The department's vision, *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences* is delivered through effective leadership and staff development, involving and engaging learners and their families, collaborating with partners, and providing the best conditions to excel. These underpin the Audit Scotland recommendations that councils are asked to take forward within a collaborative system.

14. The content of this paper has also been discussed by members of East Renfrewshire's Education Committee on 10 June 2021.

## **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

15. There are no direct financial or efficiency implications related to this report.

## **CONCLUSION**

16. East Renfrewshire Education's values-based vision, its culture of continuous improvement, and evidence of positive outcomes and impacts to date, show that the authority is well placed to address the recommendations presented in the Audit Scotland report, 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education'.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

17. It is recommended that members of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the assessment of current practice within East Renfrewshire to improve outcomes for young people and actions being taken by the Education Department to drive further improvement.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
24 June 2021

Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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APPENDIX

1. Education Department response: 'Assessment of Current Position in ERC'

Assessment of Current Position in ERC: 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' (Audit Scotland Report)						
Audit Recommendations Councils should:	Assessment Per Format of Previous Audit Scotland Report					ERC Assessment Comment
	No action needed	No But action in hand	Yes in place but needs improving	** Yes in place & working well	Not applicable	
<p><b>Work with schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, other policy teams and partners, for example in the third sector, to reduce variability in outcomes by more consistent application of the drivers of improvement set out in the NIF, by</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Using data to understand trends in outcome measures over time and across different demographic groups;</b></li> <li>• <b>using evidence-based quality-improvement approaches</b></li> <li>• <b>sharing learning and applying good practice across schools and councils</b></li> <li>• <b>helping schools to build up their data analytical, evaluation and quality improvement skills so they can make evidence-based decisions</b></li> </ul>				✓		<p>East Renfrewshire Council's Education Department's vision of <i>Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving, Through Excellent Experiences</i>, signals the department's ambition of raising the academic, wider achievement including vocational outcomes for all children and young people. The Education Department recognises the importance of education in raising the bar for all, whilst placing extra focus on closing attainment gaps for any and all groups of learners, especially for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds; education is a route from poverty.</p> <p>The Education Department considers the use of performance and management information as vital to achieving its objectives and is at the heart of the improvement planning cycle. Such information enables the department to target available resources, support and challenge, most effectively.</p> <p>The department has always used the analysis of management information and benchmarking, in a considered and contextual way as part of its drive for continuous improvement. By making effective use of national data analysis tools and datasets, benchmarking allows the department to consider its current performance and to evaluate if the ambition of raising attainment is being realised for all children and young people, by focusing its attention on particular key groups which are of specific interest.</p> <p>Key groups of interest where attainment gaps exist include gender, ethnicity, free school meal entitlement, looked after status, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and the lowest performing 20% of learners. The department focusses on such individual groups of learners, however these groups are not mutually exclusive and where an initiative focuses on</p>

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						<p>a particular group, this will have wider success for learners from differing backgrounds and circumstances. Comparison at all levels is used to highlight and question differences to stimulate improvement ultimately for each and every individual learner. Other data such as attendance rates, temporary exclusions, and levels of engagement from questionnaires etc. are likewise analysed and used to inform areas where there is scope to further improve and address in particular any issues of equity.</p> <p>Following key assessment periods or the publication of attainment data, the department undertakes extensive and rigorous analysis of the authority's and education establishment's performance, benchmarking internally, regionally and nationally. The open and transparent reporting of outcomes allows the department to celebrate successes widely and to support opportunities for sharing and collaboration between establishments, whilst also identifying areas where further improvement is required.</p> <p>Specifically, the National Improvement Framework (NIF) identifies raising attainment in literacy and numeracy as key area of focus. East Renfrewshire has a similar focus on literacy and numeracy and tracks the attainment of groups of learners from P1 baseline assessment, local and national standardised assessments in the Broad General Education (BGE) through to senior phase National Qualifications. This allows the department to track the progress of identified groups of learners from the earliest point, to support establishments in identifying critical groups of learners in their own context and supports on-going evaluation of the impact of interventions.</p> <p>Whilst the Audit Scotland review and their resulting report</p>

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						<p>considers primary and secondary schools, locally there is a strong focus on monitoring and support of learners in our early years facilities, where literacy, numeracy and wellbeing are at the fore to provide the best foundations for children and their progress through school education and future success.</p> <p>The Education Department supports the sharing of best practice and quality improvement approaches in East Renfrewshire across establishments and more widely, regionally and nationally. Each cluster of early years establishments and schools work collaboratively to identify aspects of improvement which are specific to their communities and to plan for collective change and improvement through the creation and implementation of a cluster improvement plan which the department monitors progress towards identified outcomes. This collective approach supports the sharing of best practice, success and otherwise, which are specific to the needs of the local community.</p> <p>The Education Department's annual quality assurance programme includes Thematic Reviews, Cluster Transition Reviews, Validated Self Evaluation and Collaborative Improvement Visits. Whilst these approaches to scrutiny, quality assurance and support are directed and led by the department's Quality Improvement Team, senior leaders from other establishments also play a central role in the process. This supports improvement, the dissemination of best practice, professional learning and develops relationships across establishments with the shared ambition for all learners to fulfill their potential. Staff from the department, ELC (Early Learning and Childcare) facilities and schools establishments support Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in its role of</p>

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						<p>quality assurance of educational establishments across the country. This activity helps disseminate effective practice seen elsewhere and nationally within East Renfrewshire.</p> <p>The department is represented on lead national groups such as the ADES: Performance and Improvement Network, Curriculum and Qualifications, and Education Resources Network. Membership of such groups allows the officers to be informed and to help guide national policy developments, and to share and consider practice and approaches from other local authorities.</p> <p>Officers from the department, school middle and senior leaders contribute to and lead national and West Partnership (Regional Improvement Collaborative, RIC) curricular working groups to develop collegiately and to share widely best practice and innovation. For example, this has led to meaningful cross-authority working directly between schools in the West Partnership, sharing best practice in staff professional development.</p> <p>Following the introduction of the School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP) between Crookfur and Thornliebank primary schools, which was highly evaluated by the Robert Owen Centre at Glasgow University, the SIPP programme was extended to include all early years and primary establishments. The programme, supported by officers and psychologists from the department, challenged establishments to identify gaps in educational outcomes for groups of their learners. Establishments with a similar focus collaborated to identify evidence based research which suggested approaches to address the gap in learning for these particular groups of learners and then collectively decide upon</p>

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						<p>appropriate interventions. Establishments used baseline data to identify targeted groups of learners and gathered data on an ongoing basis to measure the success of the programme. The SIP programme aligned with professional development opportunities for practitioners in professional inquiry, has resulted in the development of three school based research hubs, with a planned fourth to be developed in 2021-22. A total of 237 staff across East Renfrewshire have now attained masters level qualifications with a further 65 currently undertaking masters level study. The skills which these staff have developed in professional inquiry will support the recovery from the impact of Covid-19.</p> <p>The Education Department provides significant challenge and support through the analysis of education outcomes by EMIS (Education Management Information Service). EMIS also delivers highly evaluated professional development for staff in the effective interrogation of attainment data, benchmarking, tracking and monitoring. Professional development has been provided by education staff in the use of the department's school tracking database, national benchmarking and improvement tools for the broad general education and senior phase and the national standardised assessments. These professional development opportunities support staff in the use of the analytical toolset to identify areas for improvement e.g. groups of learners in numeracy, and to benchmark nationally and track and monitor pupil progress and the effectiveness of intervention strategies.</p> <p>Recently an ELC Tracking tool has been created and implemented. It is intended that this facility which records key developmental stages of children in early years establishments, will further support analysis of children's</p>

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						progress and identification of key groups of learners who are not progressing as well as others thereby supporting early interventions. The system is also intended to be accessible to funded partners in the private, independent and voluntary sectors; and so will assist further with transitions from early years settings to primary school.
<b>Monitor the short- and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 (including the impact of remote learning) on local children's and young people's learning and wellbeing and take action when required to mitigate the effects and improve outcomes</b>			✓			<p>During the initial school closure period between March and August 2020, the Education Department provided support and guidance to settings which highlighted the importance of ongoing engagement with learners and their families and maintaining a focus of wellbeing. Seven learning hubs were established for vulnerable children and children of key workers; all other children and young people were supported by teachers and support staff to engage with and participate in digital and remote learning opportunities to ensure continuing education provision. Senior and pastoral care staff in all settings maintained regular contact with children and families as required, whether they were learning at home or in a hub and provided additional support to address any wellbeing or learning needs. Case studies of good practice in remote learning have been published on Education Scotland's website for Carlibar, Carolside and Hillview primary schools.</p> <p>In May 2020 East Renfrewshire Education Department conducted a self-evaluation exercise on the engagement and participation of pupils with their home learning. A report on 'Digital Learning and Engaging and Supporting Vulnerable Families' was produced and shared with key stakeholders. Identified good practice was shared and feedback received used to plan Career Long Professional Learning.</p> <p>In January 2021, education officers engaged with schools to</p>

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						<p>support staff in undertaking an evaluation of how effective remote learning had been during the previous lockdown and to consider approaches for the lockdown which was in place at that time. The department provided an audit tool to support this process and to allow central collation of the results, which resulted in the production of an overview of remote learning provided by all establishments, in order to share best practice and next steps.</p> <p>The department's review of remote learning during Covid-19 identified cross department and cross-sector working focusing on the mental and physical wellbeing of children and young people. The review highlighted excellent relationships between departmental and school staff, with key partners such as Educational Psychology, Social Work and Health. Cross sector working ensured that targeted interventions continued to address learning loss and support the mental and physical well-being of children and young people. For example Reading Recovery, regular check ins with pupils and families, access for pupils, families and staff to the Council's Healthier Minds service, small differentiated online group sessions and one to one lessons, the use of Bilingual Support Workers to support children and families with remote learning, remote assemblies praise cards sent home and celebration of achievements. The Education Department ensured that children entitled to a free school meal continued to receive this at home and ensured physical school places for the most vulnerable and key worker children during and beyond school term time.</p> <p>The Education Department coordinated the creation and curation of recorded lessons by teaching staff, which were hosted and shared widely across the Council; these complemented the nationally available recorded lessons which</p>

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						<p>the department supported schools in the use of. Recorded and in many cases live lessons and drop-ins, became embedded in every day teaching and learning, reducing the impact of remote learning for all learners.</p> <p>The Education Department will continue to support and challenge education establishments by interrogating attainment data across all sectors at key points in the academic year. This analysis will take cognisance of the lockdown periods and will identify groups of learners who have possibly been affected most by the lockdown measures, and will look at longitudinal impact and outcomes. This analysis will support establishments in identifying individual children and implementing strategies to tackle learning loss immediately. Establishments will then track and monitor the success of these outcomes on an ongoing regular basis.</p> <p>A report on the Quality of Remote Learning was considered at Education Committee in March 2021.</p> <p>Following the decision nationally to cancel the 2021 examination diet, schools in East Renfrewshire are working closely with the Education Department, pupils and parents to implement the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). The strong practice in moderation and assessment, high quality remote learning offer, rigorous tracking and effective collaboration within and across the authority means that schools are well placed to ensure a shared understanding of standards and expectations and that pupils achievements are fairly recognised. The Education Department has undertaken an equalities impact assessment for the new policy and procedures to ensure all candidates are treated fairly, equitably and without bias. In addition, the Quality Improvement Team</p>

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						<p>will support schools to analyse provisional estimates and carry out any internal checks, particularly for key equity groups.</p> <p>In collaboration with other local authorities and the Scottish Government, Education Department officers will work towards introducing the national health and wellbeing survey. This survey will be undertaken by children from P5 to S6, and will focus on mental and physical health and wellbeing issues. Data at establishment level will assist the department in aligning support and resources appropriately to establishments and local communities and will support head teachers to implement appropriate strategies to tackle physical and mental wellbeing issues specific to their establishment's context.</p> <p>In recent weeks the Director of Education has been consulting staff in all educational establishment and the department and its services on a draft framework and timeline designed to support the Education Department to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic: <i>Building Back Better and Fairer</i>. The aim is to ensure not just a return to pre-covid positions, but to use the pandemic as an 'opportunity to become a truly extraordinary educational system in the future'.</p> <p>The framework, aligned with the department's Local Improvement Plan (LIP), will drive the department and establishments towards its vision <i>Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving, Through Excellent Experiences</i>, by identifying areas of particular focus for the remainder of school year 2020-21 and session 2021-22, with the LIP setting out the wider areas for improvement over its three year period (2021-22 to 2023-24). The priorities of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) are embedded within the department's LIP.</p>

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						<p>Within the <i>Building Back Better and Fairer</i> framework there will be a heightened focus on the inequalities of outcomes which may be exacerbated by Covid-19; the learning in terms of changes made in response to the pandemic that could be further capitalised on; and how best to support such going forward to deliver excellence and equity. The department is also in the process of developing a Social Justice plan linked to recovery and renewal and building back better.</p> <p>Once finalised, it is intended that the framework and activity going forward under local improvement planning, will be used to support the department to monitor and evaluate progress in response to the impact of Covid-19 and ensure more generally that East Renfrewshire sustains its drive for continuous improvement and help further its vision all learners, staff and services.</p> <p>This approach, the outcomes and impacts will be reported through future Education Committee meetings.</p>
<b>More effectively and consistently involve young people and parents in planning to improve outcomes and to inform the local response to Covid-19</b>				✓		<p>The Education Department, as part of its annual cycle of quality improvement, undertakes digital surveys of parents/carers across early years, primary and secondary sectors periodically. Pupils across the same primary and secondary establishments also complete a pupil version of the survey which focusses on their experiences of education.</p> <p>East Renfrewshire Council was a volunteer local authority to take part in the national Parental Involvement and Engagement (PIE) survey, first introduced as a pilot in 2018. This survey allows school level analysis to take place, but also supports benchmarking between local authorities across Scotland which can lead to the sharing of best practice. Plans were in place for East Renfrewshire to be 1 of 5 local</p>

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						<p>authorities across Scotland to take part in the survey in 2021, however the survey was postponed as a consequence of Covid-19 restrictions. The department will continue to undertake the PIE survey in coming years.</p> <p>The responses from these surveys allow the Education Department to consider improvement actions as part of its Local Improvement Plan and to measure the impact of these on an ongoing basis. Moreover the data shared with schools allows link officers to offer support and challenge to establishments to consider how they will address any noticeable concerns. Education establishments also undertake their own surveys to seek views of their communities and act on the results to inform improvement.</p> <p>In developing the <i>Building Back Better Framework</i>, referenced above, the Education Department consulted pupils, parents and staff to identify what worked well over the periods of remote and blended learning and what areas could have been improved. The responses from stakeholders are at the centre of the framework's development including establishing key priorities and activities required to support education establishments and services recover from the specific challenges brought about by the pandemic and address ongoing improvement under local improvement planning.</p> <p>During the pandemic all schools continuously sought pupil feedback on their learning and wellbeing, with almost all teachers using this information to help with planning for volume/pace and challenge of lessons. Parent Council meetings continued throughout remote learning in all schools, enabling effective dialogue with parents regarding remote learning offers and areas for improvement. Moreover ELC</p>

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						<p>settings and schools formally sought parental feedback through focus groups, questionnaires, online forms and commendably adapted their policies (such as remote learning) and approaches in response.</p> <p>The Quality of Remote Learning reported to Education Committee in March 2021 highlights the work on interactions with pupils and consultation with parents/carers about their engagement and wellbeing during remote learning.</p> <p>Customer Service Excellence assessment of the Education Department was discussed at Education Committee in April 2021. This assessment included reviewing the actual service delivered in establishments by examining a 'customer journey'; this was focused on approaches to providing continuity of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic across schools and services and involved learners, staff and partners. The department was awarded 31 areas of 'Compliance Plus', up from ten in 2015, and 26 in 2019. One of the areas highly commended included an ethos of consultation being integral to continuous improvement, including during changes made at pace in response the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Education Department is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights, in line with the UNCRC. Children and young people have opportunities to express their opinion in matters that affect them so that they can become active participants in a democratic society. From our annual Education Department questionnaires, most pupils (79% of 8048 surveyed 2017-19) agreed that their school listens to their views and takes them into account.</p> <p>All our settings take a 'You Say, We Do' approach to seek the views of learners on the quality of: learning and teaching;</p>

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						relationships within the setting community; health and wellbeing; success and achievements. There are regular opportunities for pupil representatives to meet with the Director of Education and share their views on issues relating to matters such as the curriculum, learning and teaching, and pastoral care. This provided valuable insight and informed improvements during the periods of school closure.  Stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of East Renfrewshire's evaluation and improvement cycle.
<b>Ensure third-sector organisations working with or representing children and young people are effectively involved in local planning to improve longer term outcomes, and to deliver the local education response to Covid-19.</b>			✓			Throughout the pandemic officers of the Education Department and schools engaged with the third-sector and other organisations in order to ensure children and young people were actively considered in planning for immediate and longer term outcomes.  Working closely with Educational Psychology team, vulnerable groups of children and young people were identified and closely monitored by staff with regards to their engagement in remote learning and their wellbeing. This resulted in those most vulnerable being identified and encouraged to physically attend school, or early years setting. The Education Psychology team supported children and young people and parents/carers with advice on mental health and wellbeing during lockdown via specialist resources on its website and also through online sessions delivered by the psychologists. The Healthier Minds service was set up and established this session, offering bespoke wellbeing support to pupils, families and staff.  East Renfrewshire Council Leisure (ERCL) trust facilitated hubs within schools during the lockdown periods, providing physical activity and wellbeing activities to support the physical

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						<p>and mental health of the most vulnerable. Over the holiday periods/school breaks, the department collaborated with ERCL to develop Covid-19 Holiday Camps which combined educational experiences as well as physical activity for the most vulnerable and key workers.</p> <p>Officers of the department have worked closely with education establishments, Skills Development Scotland, higher and further educational establishments, Work East Ren and other third sector organisations to ensure that all children and young people who intend to leave school, are able to access a positive post school leaving destination. The co-ordination and support of these organisations ensured that almost all children and young people entered in to higher/further education, employment, modern apprenticeships, volunteering or some form of professional training. This ultimately resulted in the proportion of young people entering positive destinations being significantly higher than the national value, and higher than other similar comparator local authorities.</p> <p>Colleagues in the Health and Social Care Partnership continue to work with the department as part of the inclusive holistic approach to meeting pupils' needs. Most recently their work to extend the existing school counselling service and create a wellbeing hub with a range of professionals to support mental health and wellbeing will be important in helping to address concerns and build resilience in learners.</p> <p>The third sector and other organisations work in partnership to deliver the curriculum offer including vocational options with college support, provide experiences and opportunities for learners as part of realising the department's vision for all learners.</p>

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<p><b><u>The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and councils should:</u></b> Continue to ensure a coordinated policy response within and across government (for example with health and children and families services) when planning to improve longer-term outcomes for children and young people and delivering the education recovery response to the equality impacts of Covid-19</p>						As noted earlier the Education Department has already created a recovery framework, <i>Building Back Better and Fairer</i> , which identifies the key priorities which are required to be established to support schools and services as they seek to recover. The framework is designed to complement the activities set out in the Local Improvement Plan, identifying particular areas of focus for the next 15 months, with the LIP setting out the wider areas for improvement over a three year period. This approach will be fully aligned with Scottish Government and Education Scotland guidance and the priorities and vision set out in the National Improvement Framework.
<p><b><u>The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and councils should:</u></b> Use the Equity Audit and other evidence to monitor the short- and longer term impact of Covid-19 on children's and young people's learning and wellbeing, and to inform the development of local and national priorities and targeting of mitigating actions</p>						<p>The Education Department has considered the findings of the Equity Audit from Education Scotland. As noted earlier to provide greater insight to the impact of Covid-19 locally within East Renfrewshire, the department conducted its own audit across all education establishments reflecting on the mitigations which establishments employed to reduce the impact of Covid-19.</p> <p>The East Renfrewshire audit identified key strengths in remote learning across East Renfrewshire, in Engagement and Wellbeing, Learning &amp; Teaching, Assessment, Self-Evaluation for Self Improvement and Digital Capacity. The report also highlighted areas for improvement at school, cluster and department level.</p>

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						The Equity Audit and East Renfrewshire audit supported the department in its development of its <i>Building Back Better Framework</i> . The framework will support and challenge establishments to focus on key areas of recovery, with specific focus on identified groups of learners, and will measure progress made towards building back better and fairer using a variety of qualitative and quantitative measures.
<b><u>The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and councils should:</u></b> Further promote the importance of the different pathways, qualifications and awards available to young people with parents, carers, politicians, and the media, to support wider public understanding of the importance of broader outcomes.						<p>The Education Department recognises not only the need to provide young people with alternative pathways and opportunities for wider achievement, but also the importance of celebrating such wider, non-traditional qualifications, in order to ensure parity of esteem. Such wider achievements improve the skills for life, learning and work of our young people, increase their confidence and likelihood of successful transition to the world of work.</p> <p>The vocational programme available to S4-S6 pupils, has 500 places available to any of 60 courses which are delivered locally within schools or remotely at higher education establishments and which will result in a National Qualification award or Foundation Apprenticeship. The Education Department altered the construction of the secondary school timetable in order to ensure that vocational courses were treated like all other subjects. Consequently young people can opt to study a vocational course alongside other academic studies, and attendance in these school based subjects will not be affected by undertaking a vocational course. Young people record their desire to undertake a vocational subject as they would a traditional school based subject. These approaches ensure that young people, parents/carers and school staff, see vocational studies as just important as any other and help to</p>

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						<p>provide parity of esteem.</p> <p>Valuing wider learning opportunities and qualifications, the development of the new Eastwood and Barrhead high schools, included the development of industry standard facilities to support locally delivery of vocational skills, including industry standard catering facilities and a vocational wing which supports the development of professional skills in IT and labour occupations such as plumbing.</p> <p>The impact of the wider achievement opportunities and vocational programme is evident from national analysis with East Renfrewshire recording the highest percentage of school leavers attaining at least 1 vocational qualification and being recorded as the highest performing mainland local authority, as measured by the percentage of 16-19 year olds participating in learning, training or work.</p> <p>The successes and outcomes of all children and young people are celebrated widely with Education Committee, staff groups and parent council chairs. Reporting takes different forms, for example through our annual self-evaluation report (Standards &amp; Quality), presentations and specific reports. Reports to committee, in particular the annual Standards and Quality Report and progress by the Education Department with the Outcome Delivery Plan, include various performance measures such as Information of wider achievement including Duke of Edinburgh Awards, ASDAN Awards/Personal Effectiveness, Sports Leadership and Skills for Learning, Life and Work Qualifications. Young people's achievements are recognised through a wide range of awards and awarding bodies, including the ASDAN Award, John Muir Award, Saltire Award, Caritas Award, and the Modernising Volunteering</p>

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						<p>Award. The Conveners' Awards for outstanding achievement is an annual awards ceremony event to recognise particular young people or groups.</p> <p>Following the publication of the Additional Support for Learning Review by Angela Morgan, the Education Department is undertaking its own local review and considering the recommendations of the national review. East Renfrewshire's review will consider how we celebrate achievements and successes for all children and young people and will make recommendations of how we support the implementation of a National Measurement Framework which more widely recognises the success of all children and young people.</p>

10 June 2021

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