University of Glasgow | Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

PREPARED FOR

WEST PARTNERSHIP

REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

Confidential Draft

2023 Report 3

SEPTEMBER 2023

Table of Contents

Foreword ... ***3***

Executive Summary ... ***4***

1. Introduction ... ***8***

2. Key Findings ... ***9***

2.1 ` Recovery` and Professional Learning ... **9**

From a strategic perspective ... *9*

From a practitioner perspective ... *10*

From a local authority officer/specialist perspective ... *11*

Conclusion ... *12*

2.2 Impact Within and Between Schools ... **12**

From a strategic perspective ... *13*

From a practitioner perspective ... *15*

From a local authority officer/specialist perspective ... *25*

Conclusion ... *26*

2.3 Impact `Beyond the School` ... **26**

From a strategic perspective ... *27*

From a practitioner perspective ... *28*

From a local authority officer/specialist perspective ... *31*

Conclusion ... *33*

3. Enablers and Inhibitors of Impact ... ***35***

3.1 Enablers of Impact ... **35**

From a strategic perspective ... *36*

From a practitioner perspective ... *37*

From a local authority officer/specialist perspective ... *39*

3.2 Inhibitors of Impact ... **42**

From a strategic perspective ... *42*

From a practitioner perspective ... *44*

From a local authority/specialist perspective ... *46*

4. Reflections on Progress ... ***47***

5. Conclusion ... ***51***

References ... ***52***

Appendix ... ***54***

Confidential Draft

To cite this report: Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change (2023) *West Partnership External Evaluation Report: 2023 (Report 3)*. University of Glasgow: Glasgow

Foreword

Since the establishment of the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) in 2017 the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change at the University of Glasgow has been working in partnership to evaluate impact and progress of developments. This is the seventh evaluation report and third and final report for the academic year 2022-2023. The findings from this phase of the evaluation highlight the West Partnership's contribution to and impact on the education of 35% of Scotland's children and young people, educated in over 1000 establishments across the west of Scotland.

During the RIC's short history the Collaborative has successfully navigated the effects of a global pandemic which led to the prolonged closure of most educational establishments and the suspension of national examinations, and a series of national reviews of the education system. Furthermore, the RIC continues to grapple with the implications of proposed educational reforms, challenging industrial relations and resourcing, cope with wider geo-political issues such population displacement from the Russian/Ukraine conflict, deal with the socio-economic implications caused by a cost-of-living crisis and attempt to understand and mitigate the existential challenge of climate change.

The key message from this report is that by working together local authorities, school leaders, teachers and other educators can add value to each other's work. In doing so, collectively they can enhance the learning and ultimately life chances of the children and young people they serve more than if they work in isolation. Put simply, if we are to successfully tackle the stark challenges outlined above, we will be stronger and more successful if we work together collaboratively as part of a Networked Learning System rather than if we attempt to take on the challenges alone or in siloed units.

Professor Christopher Chapman

University of Glasgow, September 2023

University of Glasgow Team: Irene Bell, Christopher Chapman, Graham Donaldson, Stuart Hall and Kevin Lowden

Enquiries/contact: emma.baird@glasgow.ac.uk

Confidential Draft

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the third phase of the evaluation covering the period 2022-2023.

This phase of the study focused on addressing two overarching research questions:

1. To what extent are West Partnership (WP) workstreams and programmes being implemented in schools and classrooms? This gave insights into the reach of the partnership as well as engagement and impact at different levels.
2. To what extent, and in what ways, are the workstreams and programmes impacting on children, young people (CYP) and families? This gave insights on the nature of impact and related processes/factors.

Evidence base

The evaluation adopted a mixed-method approach. Qualitative evidence was gathered using in-depth interviews conducted between June – September 2023 with additional information collected by notetaking, face-to-face observation and online professional learning events and dialogue with workstream leads. Quantitative evidence was gathered through an online survey (n=472). The overwhelming majority of responses (85%) were from staff working in educational establishments.

Key findings

Areas of progress and strength

Within and Between Schools

The effects of the pandemic are still being experienced throughout the system, particularly on staff and CYP`s health and wellbeing and having a detrimental impact on attendance. The impact of professional learning on teachers offered by the WP facilitated dialogue and evidence-informed collaborative working with colleagues across LA`s, which mitigated the negative impacts on CYP during recovery and beyond. WP had a positive impact on supporting recovery from the pandemic.

The collaborative culture and trust established in the WP Board is reflected in the wider working of the system. This has developed over time and was accelerated through tacking the challenges of COVID-19. This collective agency has enhanced the

Confidential Draft

functioning of the Board, fostered a culture of collaboration and promoted synergy across the local authorities.

Programmes such as Improving Our Classrooms/Departments/Schools (IOC/D/S), Thinking About Headship, Early Years activity, Pedagogy for All, and Curriculum: Learning and Teaching Cycle and the Curriculum Groups were seen as key drivers in promoting cross-authority working and school partnership.

There has been substantial progress regarding impact of the WP objectives at school and classroom level and across WP. The evaluation evidence strongly indicates that teachers' engagement with the WP has enhanced their professional learning, enabling them to positively impact on CYP`s learning and achievement.

Moreover, the learning from WP activity is being embedded in school improvement planning which is promoting the sustainability of effective practice and strategies in schools.

Beyond the School

There is evidence that practitioner and other professionals' engagement with the WP has impacted beyond the classroom, school and across local authorities.

Building relationships and engagement with parents/carers was seen as crucial to collaboratively supporting CYP`s learning.

There was recognition of the ongoing challenge of impacting positively on parents/carers and the wider community, particularly following the pandemic. However, there were examples of positive developments including family-centred work to improve transitions, attendance and wellbeing of CYP.

Key enablers to progress

- The strategic leadership provided by the Board; the collaborative culture and trust established in the WP Board is reflected in the wider working of the system. This has developed over time and was accelerated through tackling the challenges of COVID-19.
- WP activity has promoted collaboration and partnership working at strategic and operational levels in LAs and within and across schools and sectors. Importantly the WP is reported to have promoted networked learning, sharing of practice and resources across the local authorities.

Confidential Draft

- Professional learning informed by established models of good practice. The positive impact of the WP's programmes reflects models of effective professional learning practice in the literature. The WP professional learning and resources are also based on a research-based and collaborative model of improvement that aligns teaching strategies with the needs of CYP and curriculum design.
- Data-informed systems, tools and resources. These developments across the WP have played a role in fostering collaboration and impact. This includes a focused attainment/ achievement database, and the Early Years self-evaluation tool.
- Improved partnership working facilitated by the WP has supported the mobilisation of knowledge and expertise and created networks that are informing and enhancing practice in the classroom. This mobilisation of expertise and resources is promoting systems change within and across the local authorities.
- WP activities have an emphasis on self-reflection and self-evaluation which had led to increased evidence-informed practice and greater empowerment to innovate. This activity includes Collaborative Action Research (CAR) which is offered through a number of WP programmes.

Key inhibitors to progress

- The challenge of finding time for school visits and arranging cover for teachers released from school, exacerbated by the recovery from the pandemic, its lasting impact on staffing and the needs of CYP are major disruptive factors for the WP and system change and educational improvement efforts across the Country.
- Staff are continuing to cope with illness and absenteeism and attendance at WP events is still an issue for schools across the partnership.
- Strategic leaders indicated that most teachers are aware of the WP offer. However, practitioners suggest that some colleagues perceive opportunities as being for 'others' and for school leaders.
- Varied accessibility to online resources and support across the local authorities was seen as an ongoing challenge for some establishments. Not all local authorities use Glow and practitioners also highlighted issues with internet technology.

Commentary

The evaluation findings are very positive and strongly suggest that the WP is making very good progress in supporting improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in schools and promoting positive outcomes of children and young people (CYP). The

Confidential Draft

strategies of the WP have evolved to address the changing demands of the context in which it operates. This was evident in its rapid adaptation to meet the huge challenges imposed by COVID-19. Given the relatively modest levels of Government funding for the RICS, the added-value benefit of the WP in tackling educational equity and improvement is substantial. However, the WP, will need to continue to adapt, not only to diminishing public funding in the system, but also to the developing policy landscape.

The challenge of achieving equity also remains paramount and a strong focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap is still evident in Scottish government policy. However, following the detrimental impact of the pandemic on learner and practitioner wellbeing and learning, the focus of educational policy is increasingly reflecting health and wellbeing and wider community priorities. The importance of integrating appropriate sustainable digital infrastructure and connectivity for learning is also a government target. The WP has already recognised these challenges and its programmes now include additional health and wellbeing content. Moreover, it has been particularly innovative in the use of technology to facilitate its ongoing activity. Such developments have been acknowledged and welcomed by practitioners across the WP.

The WP's approach is founded on collaborative educational improvement principles and continues to embed evidence-informed collaborative working across its programmes. The WP's approach, with its enquiring stance, is key to ensuring the partnership is able to reflect and evolve to achieve its aims within the wider policy context. As the recommendations of recent educational reforms are actioned, the challenge for the WP will be to reflect these national priorities and translate them into action in a way that recognises regional and local context and need.

The WP is extremely well placed to support practitioners, school leaders, educational officers and partner colleagues address the priorities of the new educational and social landscape.

Confidential Draft

1. Introduction

This report builds on the previous cycles of external evaluation undertaken by the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change since the inception of the West Partnership (WP) Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) in 2018. The report presents the findings from the third phase of evaluation for the period 2022-2023. The focus of the evaluation for this period is two-fold. First, to examine engagement and impact to gauge 'reach' and second to provide insights and draw out the learning related to issues of impact. This report is framed by two overarching research questions:

1. To what extent are WP workstreams and programmes being implemented in schools and classrooms? This gave insights into the reach of the partnership as well as engagement and impact at different levels.
2. To what extent, and how, are these workstreams and programmes are impacting on children, young people and families? This gave insights on the nature of impact and related processes/factors.

These overarching questions are underpinned by five specific research questions:

1. To what extent has the WP impacted on schools and partnerships?
2. To what extent has WP activity reached teachers in schools?
3. To what extent has teachers' engagement with the WP led to/driven improvement in classrooms/schools regarding the agreed criteria?
4. What examples of impact on children and young people's learning can teachers' highlight in their settings as a result of engagement with the WP?
5. To what extent has teacher and other practitioners` engagement with the WP impacted beyond the classroom/school?

The findings relating to these questions are presented and discussed in sections two and three of this report and the design and methodology underpinning the evaluation can be found in the Appendix.

This report is organised into five sections. Following this introduction, section two reflects on WP professional learning (PL) during recovery from the pandemic and presents the key findings. Section three highlights some of the key enablers and inhibitors of impact. Section four summarises progress for consideration, and section five offers a conclusion.

Confidential Draft

2. Key Findings

The following sections present the key findings, firstly on recovery and professional learning, providing context for the subsequent section which focuses on impact within and between schools. The final section considers impact `beyond the school`.

2.1 ` Recovery` and Professional Learning

Key messages:

- The pandemic has exacerbated the attainment gap, detrimentally impacted on Children and Young People's (CYP) mental health and wellbeing and their attendance. There continues to be a negative impact on staff wellbeing and illness-related absence.
- Collaboration and collective agency at all levels was catalysed as a response to the pandemic's challenges. The West Partnership's (WP) agile response to the pandemic and related innovations has supported recovery from the pandemic. In particular, the various forms of professional learning offered by the WP has facilitated a `unified` perspective, dialogue at all levels and evidence-informed collaborative working across the Local Authorities (LA's).
- The WP's collective efforts have informed the development of programmes and strategies to tackle the challenges arising from the pandemic and accelerated the collaborative culture already developing across the Partnership.

One of our previous external evaluation reports [1] had a focus on the West Partnership`s response to the pandemic through its Interim Action Plan, with a consideration of recovery through to renewal. Therefore, the aim of this section is to provide some brief previous and current context of how the West Partnership has adapted since the pandemic to address the numerous challenges presented by COVID-19. We believe this important to underpin the key findings in section 2.2, because school practitioners emphasised the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on CYP and their parents/carers.

From a strategic perspective

At a strategic level, Board Directors sought collective solutions as to how best to support their CYP. e.g. in remote learning during lockdown. The Directors acknowledged that they would not have been able to develop West OS and provide

[1] Bell, I., Hall, S., and Lowden, K., (2022) *Reflections on the West Partnership Recovery to Renewal: Reimagining the Future.* Internal report. University of Glasgow

Confidential Draft

the quality of learning and teaching materials or their quality assurance by working alone within their individual local authorities. One Board Director indicated that:

> *making use of the West online, because you were working as a group of eight, you were getting a higher quality product, that was quality assured, that was drawing on the very best teachers from across the whole of the West Partnership as opposed to trying to do that just within our own local authority.*

Those interviewed were unanimous in in their view that the regular COVID-19 recovery meetings between Directors had been a key forum for sharing practice, had strengthened relationships and been a vital source of mutual support and learning for the Directors. Another Board Director thought that:

> *Some of it was support, just like a support network, you were working with peers who are facing the same issues that you are facing in your own authority.*

The Directors meetings were also viewed as being very helpful for operational purposes. For example, in terms of ensuring "COVID compliance" to national COVID-19 measures and for responding to requests and guidance with a single, and coherent voice.

The collaborative culture, environment, and trust was building across the RIC before the outbreak of the pandemic; however, COVID-19 accelerated this process so that it enhanced the functioning of the Board and it is now embedded more deeply across the RIC.

From a practitioner perspective

Some practitioners used the term *"lost learning time"* and learners feeling *"lost"* and reported the negative impacts on CYPs' behaviours, mental health and health and wellbeing upon returning to school post pandemic. One secondary Principal Teacher, thought that:

> *when the children came back from lockdown, we fed them far too much, held their hand. They felt really really lost and forgot how to be in a classroom… They got that baby bird syndrome, relying on us all the time.*

Some practitioners highlighted the gaps in attainment and referred to their "recovery programmes" and sought out the most effective strategies in an attempt to ameliorate, detrimental impacts on CYP. These centred on using features of highly effective practice, e.g. questioning, metacognition and feedback.

Confidential Draft

An additional concern for some Headteachers on the IOS programme was the change, in the structure of their school population e.g. some schools reported that the number of CYP with additional support needs (ASN) has doubled in size, to over 60% in some cases, whilst others have received high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers. One primary school undertaking IOS reported that their pupils with ESOL had increased from 5% to 24% [21 languages], with 40% of those in P1. Another reported their ESOL CYP had increased from 17% to 37%. This data refers to a sample of schools who undertook the IOS programme.

From a local authority officer/specialist perspective

Two key themes emerged from the non-school based professionals who were interviewed in relation to WP professional learning and `recovery`, attendance and work on trauma-informed practice.

The first, attendance, involved using a tool developed within the Forth Valley West Lothian (FVWL) RIC and shared across the other five RICs, including the WP. This was largely based on the use of data (embedded survey data and research) to inform practice. The use of this tool by WP provides an interesting example of sharing practice, resources and learning across RICs[2]. They saw this activity and the Attendance Working Group as central in the approach to tackling low attendance in schools. A Quality Improvement Officer suggested that:

> *when we've got this post-pandemic pressure cooker that we're seeing now, coming out with mental health, anxieties, all the things around emotionally based absence, or attendance, or how people are using that terminology… But I think as we're taking it forward now, we're still seeing that ripple effect from the pandemic. I think the Attendance Working Group is absolutely going to be pivotal.*

One participant, an educational psychologist, outlined how using the tool and in discussion and sharing practice between LAs had enabled identification of where to target resources, e.g., not in the secondary sector, but initially in primary schools, in P6. The aim was to ameliorate the negative impact on attainment from lack of attendance and thereby improving learner and life outcomes.

The second theme, on trauma-informed practice was viewed as impactful by practitioners, it was also noted that the changing nature of the landscape means that

[2] A topic out with the scope of this evaluation but an important area of further exploration. This is important in terms of both system learning and change and impact and return on investment of the RIC policy.

Confidential Draft

this area is now complex and cluttered, and it is becoming more challenging to assess the contribution of this particular piece of work to impact across the RIC.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and The Promise[3] were two areas that interviewees reported WP professional learning as adding value to their understanding and expertise. These insights were also then used to inform colleagues within their own LA. Similarly, collegiate working amongst one of the specialist groups produced an audit of recovery, wellbeing and support to inform WP PL offer and resource targeting across the WP, which some individual LAs then adopted or amended to produce their own wellbeing survey.

Conclusion

It is important to appreciate ongoing impacts of the pandemic on the education system. Staff continue to cope with illness and absenteeism and student attendance is a major issue for many schools across the partnership and across the system more broadly. We know from other field work in Scotland, that for some schools the impacts of the pandemic are worse than last year. This inevitably has consequences for the progress and achievements of CYP.

2.2 Impact Within and Between Schools

Some of the key findings presented in the following section reflect and amplify findings presented in section 2.1.

Key messages:

- There has been substantial progress regarding impact of the WP objectives at school and classroom level and across WP, with more teachers being aware of, and accessing, professional learning opportunities and support.
- The evaluation evidence strongly indicates that teachers' engagement with the WP has enhanced their professional capital and learning, enabling them to positively impact on CYP`s experiences, achievement and attainment.
- The WP activity has enhanced networked learning, cross-school and cross sector sharing of resources, tools and ideas. This has promoted attendance and a more sophisticated identification of needs of CYP through better use of data.
- The WP promotion of learner-centred strategies with more emphasis on pupil voice has enhanced practice in curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment. These developments are supported by high-quality WP resources and

[3] https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-Promise.pdf

Confidential Draft

programmes. This was frequently reported to have led to positive impact on the engagement, achievement and attainment of CYP.

- The learning from WP activity is being embedded in school improvement planning which is promoting the sustainability of effective practice and strategies in schools.
- WP activities have an emphasis on self-reflection and self-evaluation, including Collaborative Action Research (CAR), which had led to increased evidence-informed practice and greater empowerment to innovate.
- Practitioner's level of involvement in WP professional learning activities was influenced by awareness of opportunities, the availability of comparable locally available professional learning opportunities as well as the improvement priorities identified by schools' leadership teams.

From a strategic perspective

Board Directors reported impact in terms of increasing capabilities for a range of staff across the system from classroom teachers to LA staff. Improved knowledge, understanding and competence were demonstrated in a variety of areas, including through pedagogy, headteacher coaching and mentoring, trauma-informed practice and the UNCRC activity. The WP was also viewed as crucial in bringing specific groups of practitioners together e.g. an ASN group of practitioners. A Board Director reflected:

> *we've always had staff and learners where it was making an impact and particularly at a leadership level… so it's absolutely improved staff, teachers, headteachers, different senior managers, QIOs, knowledge and understanding and competence in a variety of different areas... Whether it's some of the work around pedagogy, we've had headteachers involved in the coaching, we've had folk involved in trauma, the UNCRC work. And what we've done is we've followed that up with the workstream leads to say can we see how many are attending, and they're able to share the sort of data that shows pre and post professional learning. So, it's absolutely having a difference there. It is supporting practice change, and I guess the best example for me [of that] is the IOC one.*

An additional impact, according to one Board Director was the ability of the board to speak with one voice regarding the national Reform Agenda, for example, in response to the independent review of qualifications and assessment.

> *You know, as things are taken forward on a national basis and we begin to look at the curriculum review… I mean, the Hayward Report and the qualifications and assessment report, I think that's where things will begin to carry weight, we'll have had a big voice in that because we can speak with a joined-up voice.*

Confidential Draft

The Board Directors also reported that WP programmes and activities were changing practice in schools and classrooms which in turn was making a difference to the learners` experience, achievements, and attainment. One Board Director stated that:

> *I am confident that the work that we are doing is impacting now in classrooms… You have got improving our classrooms, improving our departments and faculties and improving our schools. That is a range of programmes. We have been involved from piloting to taking part… I know they are having an impact because that has been evaluated, just looking at the feedback from the participants… They are asked about has it made a difference to attainment?*

Some directors outlined how WP activity had impacted on school staff in their own LA. For example, on areas including leadership and on secondary school assessment policy. In addition, the key learning from UNCRC activity and inequalities work by the WP was particularly impactful in informing activity in another LA.

The main examples given of changing practice in schools and classrooms were West OS Senior Phase, Specialist Networks, curriculum work on Assessment and Moderation, IOC/D/S, Young Leaders of Learning supporting pupil transitions from primary to secondary school, Thinking About Headship and Hexagon Leadership. The work around Early Years and Play was seen to be making an impact, as was the WP approach to self-evaluation. HTs undertaking the Mudd partnership`s coaching/ mentoring was also seen to be impactful. One Board Director described first-hand experience of impact in the classroom in their own LA:

> *We've got learners where it's making a difference and I think the best example of that is young leaders of learning. I think that's very powerful. I was out at a secondary school, before the end of last term, and young people were sharing some of their experiences and how they've been changing practice within the school and things like that. And they were able to talk about the work that they were doing with their three associated primary schools. Some of the pupils in those schools taking the work and the training that they've had through young leaders of learning to support pupil transitions from primary to secondary school.*

In terms of `reach` to teachers, the WP ambition is that all teachers across the RIC are both aware and able to engage in activity. However, the directors acknowledged that this continues to be a work in progress, with one recognising the inherent challenge that the scale of the WP presents.

Individual directors reflected on impact on classrooms and schools in their own authorities and suggested that the involvement of schools and practitioners depended not only on the characteristics and nature of the schools in each LA but also the SLT`s

Confidential Draft

self-evaluation improvement planning, which would then determine professional learning requirement. They argued that some schools engage in WP activity and programmes because they see the benefits and added value of the offer, whilst others may be more `nationally` outward looking and not recognise the value of collaborating across LA boundaries. For example, in one LA secondary schools were less engaged early on, but the early years and primary schools tended to be more engaged, and headteacher feedback suggests they benefited from sharing practice across LA boundaries.

From a practitioner perspective

The `sharing of practice across boundaries` was echoed by the practitioners, who highly valued the RIC offer of PL that promoted dialogue and learning through links with colleagues from other LAs. One Headteacher, in the primary sector provides a typical view of involvement in the WP`s CLPL:

> *I think the professional learning has been the most helpful… the kinds of professional learning that allow you to link with other areas, other people in different areas of Scotland. I've loved doing that; to hear about different practices from other areas.*

The opportunity and space offered by the WP to think beyond the scope and scale of their LA was welcomed. A secondary Depute Headteacher provided a common-held view by participants:

> *I think with me being in education for so long you can get stuck in your classroom, your department, your school, your authority. It was a really great opportunity to consider education locally, nationally and internationally and to think about how we fit in that. It created an opportunity for me to go and read studies on literacy… reading, comprehension and literacy strategies and how well they work in other countries and what we do well in Scotland and thinking… how we can then progress. It created space and time to do that.*

Some interviewees were keen to illustrate how involvement in WP programmes had informed and impacted on their practice during post-pandemic recovery.

One practitioner found the What Makes Great Teaching: Pedagogy for All (WMGT:PfA) collaborative action research (CAR) project, particularly useful for teaching CYP in S1 English, specifically in a support class, through metacognitive reading strategies; using pre, during and post reading strategies. This secondary class teacher described the impact of using a collaborative action research approach with the class:

> *I did the What Makes Great Teaching, Pedagogy for All... So that then led me on to do the collaborative action research with the Robert Owen Centre… So obviously,*

Confidential Draft

you know, when you're doing stuff like that you're aware of the different training… that are available… The metacognition you know, the Pedagogy for All, and that's what I based my collaborative action research on. And I thought that was really useful, teaching the kids that are in the S1 English, specifically support class as well, because we would talk through metacognitive reading strategies to help them.

This strategy was used to support those CYP at the time, but in addition were also helpful for CYP with ASN.

The following vignette provides an extended description of the benefits to another practitioner, staff, and pupils of participating in the School-to-School Partnership (StSP) Programme including collaborative enquiry (CE).

Impact from Collaboration Using Practitioner Enquiry

Vignette 1 – Impact from Collaboration Between Schools: From a Primary Principal Teacher (PT) Perspective

This participant reflected on involvement in the WP *School-to-School Partnership (StSP) Programme* but had also undertaken other WP CLPL programmes such as Primary Curriculum: Pedagogy for All, because involvement with the WP was a "great opportunity to network with colleagues across Scotland."

The PT focussed on the StSP as an example of effective WP professional learning for recovery. The school`s infant staff and SLT team visited another school to observe and discuss implementing a phonics programme across the school. In addition, they linked with their local high school, thereby enabling a smooth transition for phonics learning from P7 to S1:

Resulting from this project, we now have a more comprehensive phonics programme that runs throughout our school and into secondary ensuring cohesion for our pupils.

There have been positive impacts on both staff and pupils from this development; staff have become more confident in teaching phonics and pupils have become more independent CYP. It has also increased pupil comprehension.

This has also increased pupil comprehension as their focus is on the content of the text rather than the decoding of the text.

The PT indicated the usefulness of completing professional enquiry through the WP CLPL sessions and the additional support of the ROC Team:

They coach you into thinking more deeply about the question for the enquiry and how this can be implemented.

Positive impacts on the PT`s practice also occurred through increased confidence in skills and abilities in:

providing engaging learning and teaching experiences that meet the needs of all learners.

In addition to developing skills and knowledge which has helped to build capacity in the school staff:

Building capacity engages us all in professional dialogue where we can look at research and pedagogy with a critical eye, considering the best aspects that suits our school and our learners.

Confidential Draft

Looking to the future the PT explained that they had now embedded the new phonics programme:

We took an enquiry approach to implementing this change and found the results to be positive therefore we plan to implement this form of teaching in the middle and upper school due to its success in the infant department.

Participants claimed that enhanced professional knowledge and understanding and self-reported increases in confidence amplified enthusiasm and willingness to try new/more innovative learning and teaching strategies, with one primary Principal Teacher suggesting that:

> *Impact from WP involvement has resulted in me becoming more confident in my skills and ability as a practitioner in providing engaging learning and teaching experiences that meet the needs of all learners. Having participated in the Assessment and Moderation training with [a] WP Development Officer, alongside my engagement in QAMSO, I have developed my leadership skills in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Cycle. As a result, the staff and pupils in my school receive the appropriate pedagogy to support their learning and teaching. My increased knowledge and skills will support me to develop as a leader and a practitioner to ensure my school performs at its best through research-based theory and practice.*

These `new` strategies were reported to be more learner-centred and placed greater emphasis on the `pupil voice` in feedback to inform changes to practice in curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment (CLT&A). In many cases, this was reported to lead to positive impacts on learner engagement, achievement and attainment.

Some interviewees involved in CE programmes and IOC/D/S appreciated the broader research reading opportunities/links/resources provided. For example, broader research reading into mathematics pedagogy changed a practitioner`s (primary Principal Teacher) teaching and impacted on CYP` mindsets, in subject learning and engagement:

> *being able to have the time to really study, read about ideas about maths really informed my practice… and I was really interested in the dialogue that goes on between children. And it really supported my intervention, my understanding of how I wanted to change my teaching. I think it was a great help with COVID recovery, especially in regard to growth mindset… And so, in terms of both mindset and the way that [students] viewed maths and themselves as a learner of maths, I think that really made a huge difference in the recovery process… you know, it was their attitude to maths and engagement that really made a huge difference. …they did attain and … there was a huge difference in engagement, which was really good.*

Confidential Draft

This example demonstrates both the opportunities afforded by the IOC programme for wider research reading in addition to the impacts on learner engagement in, and attitude to, subject learning.

One secondary Principal Teacher was keen to describe the impact of the intervention on CYP`s achievements:

> *Embedded guided reading, using the cognitive grid, as a means of getting learners to evaluate their learning… [I've] been trying to think of way that I could get my third-year pupils to read social questions… It was such a brilliant result in the classroom. We had children coming from Nat 3 to Nat 4. We had Nat 3 to Nat 5 exam…So it's just motivating pupils to have more confidence.*

Other interviewees highlighted the impact upon learner attainment through involvement in WP programmes by embedding classroom practice and sharing learning with colleagues across school. For example, one primary class teacher cited an intervention on an area of challenge across the school which was harder to teach remotely during the pandemic:

> *You know, maths and reading and things are much more simple, but actually writing on genres and things, I think was probably much harder to explore with remote learning. So, again, using that [focus on learning intention success criteria] and to see the impact that my IOC had made this year on writing is definitely something that I think will help my learners attain.*

Using this intervention had a major impact on attainment in writing and the practitioner plans to continue with approach and support colleagues with CLPL on the value and impact of IOC.

Interviewees reported a much greater emphasis on self-reflection and self-evaluation because of involvement in WP programmes. This had led to more evidence-informed practice including practitioners using their own classroom and school generated practitioner enquiry findings, which in many cases prompted wider reading about the research evidence. A primary Principal Teacher outlined the plans for moderation and assessment within the school:

> *My school also have a focus on Moderation and Assessment, so we plan to use the [WP] Self-Evaluation Toolkit to audit our practice so we can identify the areas of development for our CAT and inset day. As the Self-Evaluation Toolkit has ample resources hyperlinked, we already have a starting point for those areas of development.*

A primary class teacher talked about the intervention they had implemented, using digital technology:

Confidential Draft

> *I focused on learning intention [and] success criteria… now, obviously, the way I go about it is completely different and my learners have a much better understanding in all curricula areas of what they actually mean and how to use them as a tool… I think that's what my IOC intervention showed me… So, that's a big push in IOC this year as well about including a digital element. I think, you know, as the Digital Leader of Learning it gave me lots of range to explore ways that I could incorporate digital to support the teaching and learning. And as a result, one of the tools that I did use actually had a significant impact on the attainment data that I collected through my intervention, and that's something that I have given to my Head Teacher. It's something that I've given to my Depute and again we're looking at, you know, as part of my remit next year supporting the rest of the colleagues in my school to utilise those tools really to the best of their ability to support the learning and teaching and help increase attainment.*

WP has promoted peer-to-peer learning across LAs. This was particularly prevalent for those who had engaged in WP professional learning programmes, including this primary Principal Teacher:

> *the big difference it's [IOC] made for me as a teacher was looking at the data of my class and looking at I know how many people [are] on track··· But then something changed and you think, well, actually let's look at it through different lenses, let's look at in terms of gender. Before I wouldn't have known what the gender gap in my class was, and I don't think a lot of teachers probably would, … as a teacher [I started] to think quite differently about my teaching. So instead of just going in and doing the same thing for everyone, differentiating where it needs to be, I was thinking quite differently, there was quite a shift in my teaching. And I think it really strengthened my own teaching···And being part of the West Partnership and being part of IOC and helping out in terms of mentoring and presenting to other local authorities, that, to me, has given me a big confidence boost. And my own knowledge of how I could support teachers and how I can support school, rather than just in my own classroom.*

Another intervention focused on CYP evaluating their own learning in a social subject. As part of the process the teacher recorded the feedback from the leaners which illuminated the impact the intervention on their learning. Rather than describing this at a professional learning seminar, the teacher led the session by playing the recording of the CYP speaking about their experiences and the impact the approach had on their learning.

Use of data/evidence-based approaches from both collaborative enquiry programmes and IOC/S/D were important to identify gaps and frame interventions to support CYP during recovery from the pandemic and in many cases led to an embedded and sustained approach in school, post pandemic.

Many teachers spoke about `ownership` of pupil level data and feeling empowered to innovate within their classroom and the space that WP provided to lead learning with their peers. This primary Principal Teacher provides a typical example:

Confidential Draft

before, I had quite a good understanding of my own class data, it really helped me look in depth, take more of an ownership of it, rather than leaving it to the senior leadership team. And again, it just helped me looking at features of highly effective practice, things like questioning, metacognition, feedback and how I could implement that, so it definitely gave me the motivation to kind of take it upon myself to really look at the data and figure out what I can do, rather than having to work alongside the senior leadership team. I kind of had ownership over my own class.

The following vignette demonstrates the impact on both pupils, staff and a school department of practitioner involvement in the IOC programme, in the immediate post pandemic period and beyond.

Impact from Collaboration Using Data to `Hear` the Pupil Voice

Vignette 2 – Impact from Collaboration Within School: From a Secondary Depute Headteacher (DHT) Perspective

This Depute had been aware of the WP in a previous post through some of the WP activities around school inclusion and access to higher education. They had become involved in the Improving our Department (IOD) pilot because the school wanted "to make us an excellent department, with excellent staff."

The focus for this participant was on understanding the use of data, its impact on learning and teaching and being able to identify "potential gaps in attainment." The Depute had been familiar with using data as part of the school`s improvement policy but by taking part in IOD it became more effective and meaningful for them and for departmental colleagues.

It's allowed us to show good justification in the direction we're taking the curriculum. And through conversations with pupils… so learning that the pupil voice is such an important part of that data collection. It really allowed us to drill down into our own practice through their responses and gave us a good line of development that we've taken forward for the IOD.

In terms of recovery from the pandemic, the Depute and colleagues became concerned about the pupil`s wellbeing as they witnessed "a change after the pandemic," and wondered if they were asking about their [pupils] wellbeing enough and how they [the department] were recording the information. This prompted them to develop a wellbeing tracker which allowed the pupils to both talk about how they felt they got on with their work and to track their homework and progress through the units.

And that, over a period of even the first month, we were able to visually tell how they were feeling, because of the change of colours. And we connected it to specific terms and words that they…that the pupils felt were more accurate to describe.

In addition to the impact on the `pupil voice` being heard, the DHT described how it had impacted on teaching in curriculum development, design, and evaluation. More broadly the WP experience had enabled a better understanding of how to `join-up` those aspects within the school and local authority.

We've taken elements from the West Partnership practice and IOD to develop a whole school practice on attainment and assessment following a similar framework. This is just a really good way of doing our school improvement plan and our departmental improvement plans following this framework…and everything is coming back to the impact it's having on the learner.

This has been enabled by the IOD network, holding deep and meaningful conversations and professional dialogue between different local authorities. An additional `enabler` was the leadership of the IOD, which was deemed to be, "well organised but fluid and flexible enough to have a bit of creativity in there."

Confidential Draft

Looking to the future… In terms of embedding the approach, in addition to the improvement planning, already cited, the Depute pointed to the fact that it became part of the BGE curriculum and it has been launched to other schools. There is also a growing number of staff who have been involved in the IOC programme and it`s included a lot of staff that have not been on IOC but who are seen to be good practitioners.

The impact of the WP on supporting building leadership capacity in senior managers and LA staff was also highlighted. For example, the IOS programme is led by headteachers, thus ensuring the most recent expertise and experience is informing the content and development of the programme.

Some respondents referred to the WP role in embedding approaches including better evidence-informed decision making and improvement planning, embedded across departments or school. Whilst others reported that the skills and abilities gained from involvement in WP programmes would enhance their prospects and career development.

These impacts were also described through changes to departmental learning, teaching, and assessment (LT& A) policies and strategies. Some reported embedding their learning from WP programmes into School Improvement Plans, on various aspects of LT&A, as this secondary Depute Headteacher, suggests that from being involved in the WP assessment and moderation activity, that:

> *[the WP Development Officers] were building up the skills around moderation. And looking at the [WP] resources that are here, then that's going to be something I'd like to embed... And I'm going to take that, not only from looking at what's there in terms of moderation, and the assessment, I'm going to take that and also make that part of our learning and teaching programme. Our learning and teaching programme this year is going to focus on differentiation, for the full year.*

WP programmes have been complemented and supported by high-quality resources. Respondents reported that the most impactful programmes have been the Assessment & Moderation activity, 'Improving Our' programmes, Primary Curriculum, Pedagogy for All, School-to-School Partnerships, including Collaborative Enquiry and Young Leaders of Learning. An Acting Depute Headteacher in the secondary sector sums up a typical response:

> *Actually, the impact that it has had, it is now a priority in our school improvement plan around teaching. Yes, the school improvement plan, learning and teaching with a focus on active learning and in my own department we will be focusing on digital learning to raise attainment.··· Another thing is as a school leader it is great to have these ideas and you have a vision for change. For me the West Partnership in Improving our Classrooms, validates that change that you wish to create within a*

Confidential Draft

> *school or that progression. It is my impression that West Partnership [receives] credibly within the profession. For me personally I think the quality of the resources is excellent and I felt like anybody who delivered in the sessions that I attended I felt like they were really, really high quality. I believed in them, everything was evidence based so you can't help but buy into it.*

Other aspects of WP programmes were mentioned for their positive impact e.g. Early Years and Play pedagogy and West OS (particularly in terms of recovery from the pandemic).

Two of our previous evaluation reports[4], have addressed the development and role of West OS, particularly the impact it made on practitioners and CYP during the pandemic and into recovery. Our evaluation findings (Phase 2 and 3) indicate that West OS continues to be important to key stakeholders in WP. This is evidenced by both our survey and interview findings. Ninety-four percent of survey respondents, (85% of whom were based in educational establishments), found that engagement with West OS was either `somewhat relevant` or `very relevant` to their practice.

Some of our interviewees outlined how important it was at the time of the pandemic, but also how it had *"spring-boarded"* school policy/strategy on digital learning more recently. Others indicated the usefulness of the digital element of IOC, which had in some cases led individuals to seek additional training on digital skills.

There were other examples where those who had been digitally *upskilled* during the pandemic, because of either involvement in West OS or WP Teams training, now had the confidence and/or digital literacy to develop online learning in-school.

Conferences and events have also been of note e.g. in maths (Making Maths Count) and literacy (Literacy for All). As one primary Principal Teacher conveys:

> *One of the West Partnership maths conferences I went on a couple of years ago, there was a school that presented on… story sets, but they were for maths, maths-themed… I would love to do something like that where the parents create maths games, and then they can share them out… but it's about time, we're just limited in time, but maybe this year, we've got more of a maths focus for our school improvement plan, then maybe that can be something the maths working party takes forward.*

Confidential Draft

[4] Bell. I., Hall, S., and Lowden, K. (2023) *WP Interim Evaluation Report, Phase 1 Defining and Understanding Impact.* Internal report. University of Glasgow
Bell, I., Hall, S., and Lowden, K., (2022) *Reflections on the West Partnership Recovery to Renewal: Reimagining the Future.* Internal report. University of Glasgow

A particularly notable feature of WP impact is, not only cross-authority collaboration, but the cross-sectoral learning that has occurred.

School visits across sectors and LAs prompted self-reflection and consideration of practice about the *whole* learner journey. Primary practitioners reported increased awareness of next level destinations, learning levels and transitions, which in turn impacted on approaches to current practice particularly in relation to the breadth, the depth, the challenge and the pace in a secondary classroom compared to primary settings. One primary class teacher reflected on and the impact of the visits to and from secondary practitioners, enabled by participation in IOC:

> *I think particularly this year what made a big impact on me [as] a second level teacher was; the impact of teaching and learning also with our secondary colleagues... You know, we're very tunnelled vision sometimes in primary of, you know… this is how learning intentions looks… this is how active learning looks… this is how creative learning looks; but to have those conversations with secondary colleagues about how the themes are still there, but it's totally different… I have primary fives and sixes this year, going up to seven and then going onto high school it was nice to, kind of, see what that looks [like] for them. And starting to make me think more about reflecting on … the third level benchmarks and looking at… what their next step is… that made a big impact on my personal reflection.*

Similarly, secondary practitioners reported reciprocal learning from primary practice. This included a PT adopting a more learner-centred approach to teaching, with less control and more creativity in a first-year class:

> *I really enjoyed working with the primary school as well… And it's just the same, it's gathering ideas and realising that I probably didn't ask enough, or I might stifle that creativity of my first years trying to control them and I should maybe just let them show me what they can do with what they've learned from primary school.*

Another secondary practitioner employed a different learning strategy with her higher class after observing a primary lesson. This is exemplified in the following vignette:

Impact from Collaboration Using Primary Practice in a Secondary Class

Vignette 3 – Impact from Collaboration Between Sectors: Secondary – Primary: From a Secondary Class Teacher (CT) Perspective

This practitioner was motivated to undertake the WP IOC programme because having taught for a number of years they wanted to keep their knowledge current and welcomed the opportunity to *"*to share your practice with colleagues from across the authority and across the region, as well.*"*

The class teacher recognised the effectiveness of WP activity around digital technology during the pandemic and by involvement had enabled it to be more embedded in classroom practice and across the school. This centred on learning from the course [IOC] on how digital technology could be used for feedback and assessing IT, particularly on how it could be

Confidential Draft

adapted to a classroom setting as opposed to doing it online during lockdown. One of the main benefits for this teacher was:

…just being able to be connected, I suppose with colleagues in a way that's not been possible for a number of years, being able to go into other classrooms, go into other schools and just to find out what's going on... as part of the visits, as part of Improving our Classrooms course.

Additional benefits came from visiting a teacher's classroom of a different subject in another school. However, what was particularly impactful came from a visit to a P3 class in a Primary school. This:

really, really reinforced the fact that the strategies that we were covering in the IOC course and what I do, in terms of feedback and success criteria and various things like that in the classroom is actually embedded from that early stage and play-based pedagogy which the teacher that I went to see in Primary Three class and the authority has really embedded very well.

This caused the practitioner to reflect on how those approaches could be adopted or adapted for teaching English in an SI class, which had a lot of ASN and a range of other challenges. This reflection and adoption extended to teaching in a Higher class:

there's ideas there even with my Higher class. There were things where the Primary Three class had been looking at their retrieval practice. And they'd been looking at just more independent learning strategies. And I thought, actually, if these guys can do it in Primary Three why not a Higher class.

The greatest benefits for this teacher came from the visits across the sector, undertaking research and doing some academic writing; with a view to improving outcomes and experiences for the CYP in the class:

The visits to, certainly to the primary classroom but also that chance to look at self-evaluation and do some reading. Wider reading, wider research and then to think about how that could obviously make a difference, in terms of how I go about my routine in the classroom.

In terms of embedding the approach, the CT had shared this with colleagues and delivered some CLPL on it. The approach, using different ways to give feedback including to those pupils with ASN and literacy challenges, using QR codes:

I mean, you're sitting with 30 essays to mark for Highers, for example. Even, as well as being useful in an additional support needs context. It's also really useful, in terms of giving quick feedback where the kids can listen to the feedback. They can replay it as many times as they want and even in terms of a workload burden, it's been really useful from my perspective and being able to give that feedback more quickly.

Looking to the future. the approach has been embedded within the department and likely to be sustainable if it`s rolled-out to other subjects. One `challenge` identified by this practitioner was the hybrid model because:

I got so much out of being able to be in a room with other teachers that, as much as I did get a lot out of those online sessions, personally, my preference would be to have them in person.

This class teacher would like to see the WP offering more face-to-face professional learning opportunities, to see good practice, and get the views of other people, including in other local authorities.

These findings are supported and triangulated by the survey (in the Appendix) and indicate that current initiatives and previous initiatives are making a positive impact, for example, 94% on Curriculum, 87% on collaborative enquiry and on 85% leadership.

Confidential Draft

This is impressive, given the time it often takes for impact to occur at the level of practice and sustain and embed such innovation in complex systems change (e.g. Greenwood et al, 2001; Ferreira, 2019; Fullan, 2006).

From a local authority officer/specialist perspective

These professionals were almost unanimous in what impacts had occurred in and between schools as a result of WP involvement. This was mainly articulated in regard to their own roles or specialisms and how that informed their practice in working with teachers or in schools. They stressed the benefits of sharing practice, people and resources; the knowledge and understanding accrued through networked learning from cross-authority and cross-disciplines. They gave a couple of examples around the work on attendance; where one LA shared their learning on the role of the professional, acting between home and school and the importance of high-quality mediation. The second was the WP conference on attendance, where the issue was discussed from a range of perspectives and data used. Another example of impactful professional learning developed collectively by the WP senior officer`s group was for Pupil Support Assistants.

Sustainability was also important for these professionals, where one QIO described how they had taken the learning from WP activity and implemented in their own LA and the `ripple` effect of that:

> *I bring it in, we disseminate it, and we've got a good resource, or a platform of what we developed at a West Partnership level. But then, … we pass that on, to have that self-sustaining model, to go through schools, and then other people are accountable, and manage it that way.*

They appreciated the time and space afforded by the WP opportunities to discuss common issues and avoid duplication of activity by the LA. There was also a sense of `reassurance` for most of these interviewees that "you`re doing the right thing". Wellbeing was also mentioned here, as was `efficacy` from the collaborative approach of shared responsibility, which was seen to reduce the `heavy burden` on individuals and result in producing:

> *something really useful that's going to benefit everybody – schools, teachers, staff, and you know, beyond that.*

Confidential Draft

Conclusion

The impact within and between schools, from WP activity and subsequent professional involvement has been considerable; this has been demonstrated in terms of professional capital and efficacy and resulting impacts at classroom and school level. Teachers have employed new and innovative CLT and A designs and techniques, which have had positive effects upon CYP`s engagement, achievements and attainment. Self-reflection and self-evaluation featured strongly and an increased emphasis on `learner-centred` approaches including capturing the `pupil voice`. Collaboration and networked learning have been key to this progress and cross-sectoral primary-secondary collaboration is an impactful development.

2.3 Impact `Beyond the School`

There is also evidence that practitioner and other professionals` engagement with the WP has impacted beyond the classroom, school and across local authorities.

Key messages:

- There is evidence that practitioner and other professionals' engagement with the WP has impacted beyond the classroom, school and across local authorities.
- Building relationships and engagement with parents/carers was seen as crucial to collaboratively supporting CYP`s learning. Three key areas of focus for promoting effective parental/carer engagement were identified: Transitions, Parental/Carer Empowerment and Ownership and Social Justice and Entitlements.
- There was recognition of the ongoing challenge of impacting positively on parents/carers and the wider community, particularly following the pandemic. However, there were examples of positive developments including family-centred work to improve transitions, attendance and wellbeing of CYP.
- The role of Community Learning and Development (CLD) in WP activity to promote family learning in the context of equity was highlighted as was the WP activity around UNCRC and the Promise.
- The local authority officers and WP leads and specialists were seen as having a key role to play in coordinating, facilitating and enabling multi-agency and partnership approaches in the context of WP programmes to enhance impact beyond schools.
- The challenges in promoting impact beyond the school were reported as being staff turnover and availability; releasing teachers and support staff to access professional learning in the context of high levels of staff illness and restricted budgets for staff cover.

Confidential Draft

From a strategic perspective

The Board Directors acknowledged making a difference for parents/carers and the community and the need for continual improvement as a significant challenge for the WP. Directors noted that despite the challenges that progress had been made and the WP had added value in this area. Specifically, the most recent work on attendance was highlighted as a key post-covid issue for all LAs.

The WP professional learning offer on attendance, including using the FVWL attendance toolkit had gained significant engagement from across LAs in the partnership. For example, Headteachers are using the data tool to analyse attendance and inform School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The ROC Team supported collaborative enquiry between schools on issues of attendance. This involved working across WP with multi-disciplinary teams including educational psychologists. This Board Director outlined the WP activity on attendance in their own LA:

> *Well, we had every secondary school and most [of] our primaries and ELC establishments attended the professional learning that was put on. And from being out and my team being out and speaking to headteachers during their visits they're able to see the impact that that then has had in terms of the way that the staff are using data to look at children's attendance… there's a greater focus in their own improvement plans. And we've got…I think it's three establishments from one area [in the LA] taking part in a ROC professional enquiry with other establishments around attendance. …we've got an educational psychologist who attends the attendance group, from the LA, and is feeding that back and sharing practice.*

Some reported that the WP Wellbeing for Learning (WfL) WS was making the most impact beyond the school. It was noted that the Community Learning and Development (CLD) was particularly strong. In addition, the Early Years (EY) Group was seen to be "invaluable" for working with families and the WP work around 1140 was also considered to be making a difference in this area. This Board Director focussed on the Wellbeing for Learning WS activity:

> *The wellbeing for learning is probably… making the most impact because you've got the CLD aspect of that workstream, which I think, you know, if you're looking at the supporting families aspect, then there's been really good practice in that… [The] early years group was really invaluable to working with families as well. You know, it was looking at good practice in early years but also how we impact on families. I think there's some really interesting things they're doing on the evaluation of 1140 as well just now, on the day of a young child and how they're impacting on learning and child care will be absolutely essential in that as well. So there's some good work with families, some good CLD work that I've seen... So I think something around parenting support within the West OS to get that online would be of real benefit to parents too.*

Confidential Draft

Trauma-informed practice was reported to have an impact at home in the way parents were being supported with children who have experienced trauma. The coordination of 'Teams' meetings and use of digital platforms had made a difference to this work in supporting families. The WP work on home education by improving guidance and consistency across LAs to provide clarity and support for parents was considered an important feature of WP contribution. Some additional examples were provided by this Board Director:

> *We've had one of our QIOs involved in the home education work, in terms of improving the guidance that we make, that's available for our parents and getting consistent approaches across authorities, and I think that's an interesting one in that if parents have moved from one authority to another that can be quite a complex landscape to navigate. So actually, there's things we can do there to try and simplify that, that will definitely support parents.*

From a practitioner perspective

School-based interviewees also focused on family learning and engagement offering some examples of how they had used their learning from WP involvement to build better informed relationships with parents/carers. The key issues coalesced around three themes: Transitions, Parental/Carer Empowerment and Ownership and Social Justice and Entitlements.

The school practitioners mainly focused on parent/carer engagement and involvement, and family learning to discuss impact beyond the school. They stressed the importance of building relationships with parents/carers and their role in encouraging CYP to attend school. The FVWL attendance toolkit and aligned WP professional learning had been impactful in helping to identify learner needs through better use of data.

Some practitioners shared their learning from participation in the IOC programme. One focused on children's behaviour as this had been affected by the pandemic and hoping to improve confidence and motivation (which is higher at home). Take learning from the primary sector – to start a guided reading programme across primary and secondary schools. Another participant was implementing new strategies and new ways of teaching and new ways for teachers to disseminate information and data to parents as a means of enabling more involvement and openness.

Confidential Draft

Four key areas of impact around transitions came to the fore during interviews. First, the issue of vertical integration, second, transitions into nursery/EYs, third, transitions into primary and fourth, transitions from primary into secondary settings.

The WP self-evaluation tool used in early years was considered as very helpful in enhancing these transitions because it provided stronger evidence about the child. The tool used quality indicators combined with findings from stakeholder surveys including parents to develop and monitor action plans for children.

Some interviewees spoke about the barriers to smooth transitions for some CYP due to anxiety, ASN or other challenges including living in poverty and behavioural issues. Funding was also raised as a concern, for example, Parents in Partnership funding had been removed and reduced opportunities and "ownership" or involvement especially in enhanced transitions. One secondary Depute Headteacher outlined some of the challenges in this area and offered some suggestions for how the WP might offer some networking opportunities to address those:

> *from speaking to other colleagues [there is] an area that many of us, many schools across Scotland, could do a lot better… As an example, we had a Parents in Partnership, and the funding has been pulled this year, for the first time. But I can tell you that, I've been able to develop a lot of valuable relationships. We targeted the young people that would need enhanced transitions. And we were then able to work with them, invite them into the school, invited two or three of the parents to become part of the committee, around what would actually work. So, they had ownership over the direction that we kind of steered the group. And the relationships that built from that… a lot of that has been taken away. So, could the West Partnership… look at engineering opportunities for parents… because there could be training opportunities. And, again, networking opportunities, just to learn from other schools, what do they do. Because you'll know schools that have been very successful in engaging with parents, and what were the challenges, what were the barriers that they faced, and how did they go about building up, and sustaining it.*

Practitioners spoke about the reluctance of some parents/carers to come into school to discuss CYP learning. This was seen to be partly due to a preconception that parents/carers couldn't support their CYP because *"they teach differently now".* A further explanation was that aspects of the curriculum and language and vocabulary used alienated some parents/carers. The interviewees believed that these should be addressed to empower parents/carers to have a greater role in supporting CYP learning and shifting mindsets about what that is. It was argued that WP could play a crucial role in leading change in this area. An acting primary Principal Teacher shared some ideas and offered some suggestions:

Confidential Draft

> *Maybe some family learning events... Especially with the rollout of the iPad and digital learning. While most people are fairly tech savvy… I think some of the apps that we use in schools to support children's learning, some of the accessibility features, I think they would be useful for parents to have additional training on. And I think even some of the features of the curriculum, you know, how many parents really understand what a learning objective and a success criteria are… do they understand why we differentiate the way we differentiate, and the different ways that we can do it and why their child might be getting this certain level of support and another child might be getting something completely different. [This] gives them, you know, the kind of understanding and the vocabulary to… if they feel that their child should be in receipt of something that they're not getting, to come in and have a discussion with you… and feel more empowered about it. … I think more education-specific family learning, information events for parents, so that they really understand what's going on in the school.*

Interviewees stressed the value, importance and impact of working collegiately across the WP to support practitioners to have shared expectations and understandings that pupils in all areas of WP will access high quality learning and teaching, irrespective of their school or local authority. Furthermore, those entitlements should also be extended to parents/carers.

It was recognised that the WP has an important role to play in improving family engagement and involvement across the region. Furthermore, interviewees recognised a role for WP in promoting equity across the region. One primary practitioner cited the large increase in parents looking for support, compared to the last few years. The parents expected the same level of support they had received in nursery school in regard to e.g. health information or welfare programmes. This practitioner did try to become better informed about the context of some of the family situations in the area but felt that the overreliance on SIMD data was unhelpful, and not nuanced enough to offer insight to specific issues faced by 'real families'.

Other perspectives highlighted the potential for WP to raise awareness on equity related matters across the wider community. For example, recognising the value of being a speaker of English and another language, and raise awareness of gaining ESOL qualifications as a positive pathway to university, for example.

Interviewees reflected that WP was in a very good position to build on its existing networks and partnerships to give parents/carers the tools to support their CYPs learning.

Confidential Draft

From a local authority officer/specialist perspective

Professionals involved in providing specialist knowledge or services in supporting CYP, practitioners and families were clear about WP's impact beyond the school or *"school day".* Most also indicated that they saw the WP`s role as one of coordination, sharing, collaborating, having an impact by *"proxy",* facilitating and enabling multi-agency and partnership approaches. Sharing information and resources was seen as key role for WP in impacting beyond the school for those interviewees, especially around sharing effective practice and facilitating discussions. A Quality Improvement Officer was clear on the WP role:

> *I mean, with regards to beyond the school day, and because it's bringing local authorities together, and we're sharing that practice and ideas, you know, without judgment. And it ultimately supports the learners throughout the Centre, and then looking at GIRFEC, obviously, it also then impacts nationally on the wider community, and their families.*

Understanding the power of networks and networking were a particular feature for this group of interviewees. They argued that working collegiately to develop and share resources at a WP level, which would then be shared across networks to have a sustainable impact across schools- for the benefit of teachers and the CYP and families they serve. Underpinning this, is the consideration of what are the greatest impacts for CYP, staff, teachers etc. and the belief that sharing for impact was about promoting efficacy, and working together, especially when budgets are being restricted. WP was viewed as a mechanism for achieving economies of scale and enhanced performance within the context of a financial crisis.

Put simply, the officers and specialists saw themselves as key players in building a *networked learning system* that could build bridges across a range of boundaries and work differently to meet the demands of the future.

One example was the work around the Promise and care experienced CYP where a collective approach to building knowledge around this area and how to develop and maintain relationships with CYP and their families. This has involved a diverse group of professionals, including support officers, improvement officers and educational psychologists across the WP.

Learning from other people, seeing what's worked elsewhere across the WP was typically seen as having had the greatest impact on those specialists interviewed. In

Confidential Draft

this sense they are key to identifying and moving practice and expertise around the partnership.

Participating in face-to-face events was deemed more beneficial for this group compared to virtual provision. They also highlighted certain challenges for teachers and support staff regarding getting out of school to access professional learning. Pressures included high levels of staff illness and the ability of HTs/SLTs to access cover, especially within restricted budgets.

Some activity is focused on parental engagement, around family learning and about youth work in the community, which interviewees believed had a wider reach, and stronger impact. This was contextualised and exemplified by, for example, the youth work group and CLD involvement in supporting young people. Other examples focused on the WP activity around the UNCRC and the Promise, which had impacted on LA activity and learning. The WP work on attendance was recognised as beneficial and interviewees were keen to emphasise the importance of building good relationships with parents/carers/families in engaging CYP.

The following vignette includes two `perspectives`, which encapsulate the essence of `impact` from the previous narrative. It differs from the previous three [vignettes] as interviewees were asked about what impact, from involvement in the WP, looked like, or could look like, `beyond the school`, for parents/carers and the wider community.

Impact from Collaboration Using (a) Innovative Practice and (b) Networked Learning

Vignette 4 (a) – Impact from Collaboration Beyond the School Through Empowerment: Perspectives of a Primary Principal Teacher (PT)

This participant was keen to stress the importance of parental empowerment and the misconceptions that some parents may have about contemporary teaching methods and subject content, which may provoke feelings of being disempowered:

Parents don't feel that they can help their children often, because they come up with the comment which…I've heard this over the years, we can't help our children because you teach it differently than we had it in school, and I just feel that again, people are stuck on procedures and rules and methods. And it isn't about that, it's about the discussion between the child and what the child… how the child understands something.

In an attempt to alleviate this, the PT used the intervention they had developed, whilst doing the IOC programme, to give parents the opportunity to try some of the maths that the pupils had done and then return it. Although, most of the parents involved were reluctant to engage, possibly due to their concerns about their own maths ability, it did result in the pupils becoming more empowered:

Confidential Draft

I think the children themselves became more empowered to go to their parents and say, you don't need to give me a way to do this or the answer to this, but can I have an opportunity to discuss it with you.

Looking to the future…this practitioner thinks there is potential for WP activity around the empowerment of parents; including involvement and engagement.

(b) Through Partnership Working: Perspectives of a Local Authority Head of Service (HoS)

This participant indicated some of the work the WP was doing already `beyond the school`, particularly the work that had been undertaken in the community, with Community Learning and Development, (CLD):

Obviously, one of education's key partners in supporting young people, especially when we look at the increase in youth disorder out in the community.

This HoS also pointed out that whilst there was a focus on behaviour in schools at the moment, it was really a "societal problem" and `education` could not address it alone, stressing the importance of having opportunities to have joint working with wider partners and the effectiveness of such:

I think the work around CLD, and youth work, has been really successful.

The participant also cited the WP professional learning on home education, where the group, from across the WP LAs, had developed resources and updated guidance for the LAs, based on best practice, which would have an impact on parents and carers.

Looking to the future… the HoS suggested that:

what you want is some of the work to be focused around parental engagement, around family learning, about youth work in the community, that then has that wider reach, and wider impact.

Conclusion

There is a focus on family learning and engagement, across the WP but a recognition of the challenges involved, particularly across, three key themes: Transitions, Parental/Carer Empowerment and Ownership and Social Justice and Entitlements. Strategies which were helping to identify learner needs included better use of data and reducing some of the perceived barriers to engaging parents/carers in CYP learning, Participants believed the WP was in a very good position to build on its existing networks and groups and established relationships to give parents/carers the tools to support their CYPs learning.

Confidential Draft

Confidential Draft

3. Enablers and Inhibitors of Impact

3.1 Enablers of Impact

This section of the report moves on to consider the key factors associated with promoting or hindering success. Again, we use strategic, practitioner and LA officer/specialist perspectives to organise the findings.

Key messages:

Enablers

- High-functioning Board and governance structure, based on mutual trust and respect and commitment and `buy-in` from LA staff; to vision and culture.
- Focus and relevance of WP activities and resources to practitioner work and broader educational aims.
- Professional dialogue opportunities and networked learning enabled through protected time secured by the Working Time Agreement.
- Use of data and research in promoting evidence-informed practice.
- Access to programmes of quality professional learning and associated resources.
- Leadership and Support from the WP WS Leads, expertise of programme deliverers and academic support of ROC `critical friends'.
- Opportunities for specialist professionals to meet and learn from/share within and beyond the community e.g. educational psychologists.
- Enhanced opportunity for meaningful collaboration and knowledge mobilisation across schools and local authorities.
- Promoting whole school change facilitated and supported by school leaders drawing on WP supported ideas and innovation.
- Effective use of digital systems and resources by WP colleagues to reach practitioners and school leaders which complemented an increase in digital approaches in schools.

Inhibitors

- The pandemic was seen as a major inhibiting factor for pupil progress and school improvement. It continues to affect school staff absence.
- The funding allocation duration and timing of award was seen to create uncertainty for effective strategic planning for the WP. Single year funding was deemed to be challenging, potentially undermining strategic planning and ambition.
- The secondee model does not support investment in permanent staff or renewing secondee contracts and the associated 'staff churn' can impact progress.

Confidential Draft

- Uncertainty about the future RIC policy is exacerbated by wider uncertainty from the reform agenda, teachers` industrial action and teacher workload in general.
- Time for schools to be involved in the WP and communication to them as to the benefits of involvement were still identified as challenges.
- Access to IT hardware and software, including problems with accessing Glow, had hindered some engagement with WP activities.
- Releasing teachers from routine school commitments or getting support staff out of schools was seen to be a challenge due to lack of `backfill`.

From a strategic perspective

Board Directors identified a number of key features which they believed had enabled impact in classrooms and schools, including:

Partnership self-evaluation- had been instrumental in providing focus for the specialist three workstreams and identifying and targeting areas of priority across the eight LAs. The WP leads and strategic support from the university were acknowledged for their part in helping to shape that direction and focus on impact.

Opportunities for achieving economies of scale- The size of WP (covering 35% of Scotland's children and over 1000 establishments) presents a challenge in terms of reaching into every classroom. However, the size of the Partnership means that much more can be achieved together, gaining from *"scale economies"* to undertake improvement work which individual local authorities would find difficult to deliver on their own. This point is exemplified through the recent WP work on 1140 evaluation. Access to high quality presenters and professional learning opportunities was another example of collaboration, which an individual LA might not be able to resource alone.

Collective identity- WP is building a strong collective identity across senior officers in the LAs. Commitment and buy-in have increased as the partnership has evolved. There is a sense of ownership of change and an understanding that WP must add value to the work of LAs rather than replicating it. There was an increased involvement from staff at all levels, about how to shape improvement collectively; the most recent example of this was seen to be the

Confidential Draft

work around attendance. UNCRC work undertaken by WP was also considered to have added value to the work of individual LAs.

Interviewees identified authentic collaborative working as key to achieving reach and impacting on classrooms. West OS and Secondary Moderation Groups have fostered collaboration across LAs, this work has been a particular strength of the WP. Opportunities to work collaboratively across the WP more widely, was seen as a key driver of wider impact. Building relationships and networks, learning from peers, and sharing practice were viewed to be key to this approach. Along with systematic enquiry these are the foundations which has been key to building the networked learning system. At the classroom level this had translated into better use of data in planning learning experiences and increased joint practice development between staff across LAs. One Board Director was very clear about the focus of the WP and the specific features, which enabled impact:

> *I think there's something… based on our self-evaluation as a partnership, and… that it's targeted to the right areas. … at the moment it's targeted to those three key workstreams, and that also reflects the feedback and the consultation from stakeholders. So in terms of enabling impact… it reflects the needs of the eight local authorities… people are increasingly seeing… that we belong, that they are part of the West Partnership in that way. And I think that's the subtle difference because rather than things being done to you, then you have the ownership of it and you are shaping it and you are deciding how we bring about improvement together… And in the context of reduced resources, you have to be constantly asking how do we maximise the resources that we do have to get them, the greatest benefits. So I think things like IOC have enabled us to say… there's a programme that we know, it's evidence based, is making a difference and is supporting those connections and that collaboration and those networks… we've talked about the added value. I think it does just provide those opportunities, professional learning and it provides that opportunity… network learning. I think that is really beneficial. I think that goes a long way in terms of the key features, that focus, needing to look at the different workstreams, and then the specialist networks. Those provide those opportunities which our staff are always asking for to get beyond their classroom and to work with others to find the solutions they need to bring about that improvement, and I think that's critical.*

From a practitioner perspective

The WP has provided practitioners with opportunities for enhanced professional dialogue and networked learning. This has involved working across school, LA and professional boundaries to enhance and innovate practice.

Another key enabler for those involved in the WP IOC/D/S programme was the `protected/secured time`, allocated through the Working Time Agreement to undertake

Confidential Draft

joint visits across schools and LAs. The opportunity that WP provides to visit schools in other LAs was of particular importance to these participants. They cited the benefits of working in trios, sharing practice, and having "deep" discussions around pedagogy, curriculum design and development. This involved colleagues sharing practical examples of effective practice, hearing from other teachers of "what makes a good lesson" and drilling it down into, for example, the difference between a stronger and weaker learning objective and why. As one secondary Depute Headteacher explained:

> *The staff were… not afraid of it at the start, but unsure is probably a better word. Because we know the pressures that everybody's under, with lots of work and caseloads and all the rest of it. But when we explained that the IOD programme is developed so that it's part of your everyday running, this is what you should be doing anyway, and it breaks it down and you can see the different elements all work together. And because we have been in the fortunate position with the programme, it allows you…with the Working Time Agreement, you don't have to focus as much on your departmental improvement plan because this takes the form of it… So, every member of staff in the department, which is a department of four, we've all got elements that we're working on together. So, it's very collegiate.*

Interviewees were extremely positive about collaborative/networked learning with other teachers and ensuing professional dialogue, including learning about effective practice from other teachers. They were also positive about how WP had supported the use of data and research to enhance their own practice. They welcomed the opportunity to consider "big picture evidence" about high-performing education systems and national and local data on attainment, for example. Comparative analysis was used to explore variations at LA and school level.

However, it was underpinning research and the use of class/school data which was reported to have the greatest *direct* impact on learning and teaching and subsequent attainment. This was widely reported by class and principal teachers from the IOC /S/D programme, and those involved in CAR and Curriculum WS practitioner enquiry projects. Not all interviewees were able to report impact on attainment, largely due to the time required to assess impact on attainment. However, the majority of respondents reported very positive impact on engagement and learner achievement.

Many of the interview participants referred to the WP increasing `ownership` of data and feeling `empowered` through increased understanding and the ability to identify gaps in learning and to try new and innovative teaching techniques e.g. problem-solving skills and collaboration in Mathematics and use of differentiation techniques based on the use of gender-based data. This view of ownership and empowerment

Confidential Draft

contrasted with some previously held perceptions that class data and targets were the domains of `management` and not class teachers. Similarly, some `management` staff interviewees commented on such empowerment among class teachers by taking ownership of their classes and working towards a shared goal. A primary class teacher, who had undertaken the IOC programme, stated that:

> *I know I keep coming back to data, but I don't think I ever appreciated how much that would change my practice in terms of planning. It was really useful having… we had like input on, you know, planning at the beginning, you have your plans and then it changed, and then by the end it will change again. But that sort of overall looking at the year, you are already thinking ahead of next year, and go right, actually, I want this piece of information and I want to then start looking at gaps and that was certainly a discussion as well about using different techniques, like metacognition or feedback and things. Taking all those elements and I'm going in ahead of the year with that rather than trying to resolve a problem and being pro-active, more so than ever… I'm setting up good strategies beforehand… the more information you have, the better it will be for you and a better impact on the children… I would share case study with the classes. We only have four classes in the school, so the two other upper classes have then used my strategy and my case study, and that's now implemented across the school.*

Another key enabler to the above was the support from the WP WS Leads and research and developmental support of the ROC team. The WS Leads were viewed as critical in their roles as leaders, coordinators, facilitators and `boundary spanners` of networks and groups, providing the support and scaffolding for CLPL. The ROC team were highly valued as "critical friends" and methodological experts to support practitioner enquiry/CAR projects.

Increased awareness of how data is used in different ways by schools was impactful for one Newly Qualified Teacher. Undertaking the IOC had been very helpful to them in considering and analysing data. The WP provided support and the opportunity to visit schools across the WP. On reflection the practitioner concluded that if they had not done the IOC programme that they would not have progressed to where they are now.

From a local authority officer/specialist perspective

Two key features in enabling impact in schools for this group of interviewees were, first, that WP activity around the Promise was providing a platform to raise awareness and share knowledge around care-experienced children and in a sense leading change in this area; maintain relationships with them and beyond, putting the child at centre and increasing awareness about outcomes for children care-experienced

Confidential Draft

backgrounds. This Quality Improvement Officer focussed on the importance of the WP (and partner) activity around the Promise:

> *This resource has been something I've been doing for a long time… There was a real, you know, multidisciplinary group involved in developing this resource. So, I have been doing some training, in-house, to raise awareness around [and] about the Promise, but this is only going to enhance, and put accountability onto our schools to make sure we're sustaining, and the staff are continuing with that professional development and learning around about care experienced children and young people. And more importantly, the Promise, because we've made that national obligation to supporting this vulnerable group, and people need to be aware that it is a national priority, it should be in their improvement planning. You know, it should be something that they're all aware of. So, I think that is going to be particularly useful, because of how we want to monitor, and quality assure it… And it only… goes to enhance what they can do with learners who have come from a care experience, or who are currently in a care experience background. So, I think, again, we're going back to child at the centre, and where are each learner's needs.*

The key enabler to this work was the WP coordinating and facilitating the establishment of a multi-disciplinary group, involving a range of practitioners across the LAs who shared learning and practice to develop support and CLPL around the Promise.

The second one was the facilitation of specialist networks and groups, drawn from across the WP LAs to share knowledge and practice with peers. One working group was looking at specialist areas such as distressed children and young people and supporting seminars and conferences across LAs.

This was also the case for another interviewee who appreciated learning from colleagues and mutual sharing with other educational psychologists.

In turn, this had a positive impact on their professional community which was seen to be going from ` strength to strength`. One example of their work on play pedagogy, was given as having an impact on other colleagues.

In summary, there were several features which all the interviewee groups found to be particularly important in enabling impact on schools and classrooms:

- Well-functioning Board and governance structure, based on mutual trust and respect and commitment and `buy-in` from LA staff; to vision and culture;
- Focus and relevance of WP activities and resources to practitioner work and broader educational aims. The majority of respondents who engaged with current West Partnership initiatives found their WP experience ‘somewhat relevant’ or ‘very relevant’ to their practice, (76 – 95%). For all nine identified

Confidential Draft

initiatives, almost all responding found the experience either ‘somewhat relevant’ or ‘very relevant’. Accounting for, for example; over 90% of those taking part in CLT&A, CE and IOC/D/S sessions. Moreover, in seven out of the nine WP initiatives a majority of responses identified the experience as ‘very relevant’ to their practice.

- Similarly, those who had engaged with previous West Partnership activities were generally positive about its relevance to practice. More than 75% of responses, (76 - 94%), indicated that the initiative had been either ‘somewhat relevant’ or ‘very relevant’ to their practice. Accounting for, for example; over 85% taking part in Curriculum, Collaborative Enquiry/Learning and Leadership sessions;
- Professional dialogue opportunities (for deep conversations) and networked learning (particularly with colleagues from other LAs and opportunity to visit schools and observe classroom practice, out with own LA); Enabled for some through protected/`secured time`, allocated through the Working Time Agreement, to visit colleagues in other schools (IOC/D/S programme);
- Use of data and research in promoting evidence-informed practice;
- Cross-sectoral and reciprocal learning; Primary - Secondary - Primary.
- Access to programmes of quality professional learning and associated resources that is not always available locally. The quality of content and presentations which inspired and motivated practitioners;
- Leadership and Support from the WP WS Leads, expertise of programme deliverers and academic support of ROC `critical friends`; providing the scaffolding required for high-quality CLPL;
- WP providing opportunities and `platforms` to raise awareness of current policy and issues e.g. UNCRC. Networked learning through inter/multi-disciplinary approach;
- WP providing opportunities for specialist professionals to meet and learn from/share within and beyond that community e.g. educational psychologists;
- The enhanced opportunity for meaningful collaboration and knowledge mobilisation across schools and local authorities as the West Partnership facilitates networking and partnership working;
- Promoting whole school change facilitated and supported by school leaders drawing on West Partnership supported ideas and innovation

and

- The effective use of digital systems and resources by West Partnership colleagues to reach practitioners and school leaders which complemented an increase in digital approaches in schools.

Confidential Draft

Put simply, The WP continues to build capacity across the education system in the west of Scotland at classroom, school and LA level. It is also demonstrating impact for individual classroom practitioners, school leaders and children and young people. WP added value to the LAs is still a prominent impact for many. It has achieved this through a focus on collaborative and networked learning, building collective capacity and capital and high-quality CLPL complemented by similarly high-quality resources.

3.2 Inhibitors of Impact

This section reports on the main challenges interviewees identified as inhibiting the impact of the West Partnership activity and impact.

From a strategic perspective

The key challenges presented here from interviews with board directors centre on `uncertainty` and are largely out with the control of the WP:

The funding allocation duration and timing of award was seen to create uncertainty for effective strategic planning for the WP. Single year funding confirmed in June (2023) for the Year 2023-2024 was deemed to be challenging, potentially undermining strategic planning and ambition. There was also the ongoing challenge of the secondee model not supporting investment in permanent staff or renewing secondee contracts. This was viewed as having an impact on the coherence of the WP and operational continuity of activity. Whilst staff rotation can support renewal and bring fresh perspectives, when it affects a large proportion of a small team it tends to compound challenges relating to continuity, transition and succession planning.

Furthermore, the small resource allocation for WP is a challenge. However, the level of funding relative to the size and scale of the WP and size of the offer provided by WP represents an impressive return on investment and demonstrates strong leadership and willingness to take risk in an uncertain environment. This also presents a challenge, in that with an increased funding commitment more could be achieved, and additional impacts realised.

The political context or commitment was also seen to be challenging in regard to review of the RICs. There was a SG review which reported at the end of December 2021 and another is on-going in October 2023. Regular reviews of this kind are unnerving for those involved in leading and developing the WS. They fuel uncertainty

Confidential Draft

and speculation which create challenges in maintaining commitment and ambition. In turn, this increases the leadership burden on those taking these developments forward, often in the margins of their day-to-day role without full economic costing. This uncertainty about the future RIC policy is exacerbated by the wider context of uncertainty including the reform agenda, teachers` industrial action and teacher workload in general, the complexity and fragility of this situation is at risk of undermining the conditions required to optimise the potential of the WP.

One challenge for the system is to get resources to where they are more needed and where they can have the most impact. This is the case for the relationship between WP and national efforts to support improvement. Achieving this would help to avoid duplication of activity and provide clarity of understanding for staff and, perhaps most importantly, ensure added value in terms of impact and efficiencies, whilst supporting subsidiarity.

Time for schools to be involved in the WP and communication to them as to the benefits of involvement were identified as additional challenges. It was also recognised that not everyone needs to know everything, but perhaps that communication could be clearer to class teachers, about potential benefits of taking up the WP offer, this was viewed as a work in progress.

Another challenge identified was a “drop-off” in numbers committing to some of the professional learning opportunities, particularly those involving professional enquiry. Practitioners continue to participate in professional learning input but sometimes not the “follow-up”. This was perhaps not surprising, in that these practitioners, in the main, undertook professional learning around professional enquiry in their own time, after the school day.

The FOCUS Tool was also mentioned as a challenge because rollout appeared to have been held up due to external factors such as gaining permissions.

Perceptions of the role of HT was seen as impacting on numbers applying for headship across the partnership. The nature of the HT role was seen as having shifted towards a more managerial rather than leadership or learning and teaching role following COVID-19. The WP Thinking about Headship programme was seen as one potential solution to this issue. This Board Director acknowledged the challenges or `inhibitors` to impact, which were largely out with the control of the WP:

Confidential Draft

I think that creates a level of uncertainty, and it makes it difficult to plan effectively in a strategic way when you don't know whether the funding's going to be there. And associated with that… it doesn't allow for any permanent staff. So you've always got a churn in the staff. Now there's some benefits to that, don't get me wrong, because I think it brings a freshness. But when they're all like that, that again further adds to the uncertainty... I think there's something around… the lack of investment or the scale of it. I mean 1.6 million… sounds like a lot of money, but for the scale of the West Partnership it is a tiny amount. You could do more, you could have greater impact if there was a greater commitment. But within terms of the timing and the planning of it, and the scale of it… There's something also associated with those, and maybe underlies both of them is around the uncertainty that comes from the political place or the commitment nationally. So although they're established, what, six years ago, the constant…I mean this is the second review they've announced, after one…I think it was only published at the end of 2021. It creates that view… that maybe they won't be here next year because we'll just do away with them. In which case people are less likely to commit to their programmes and workstreams and you reduce the impact.

From a practitioner perspective

None of the interviewees believed that there was anything that `limited impact` in their experience of WP involvement. They acknowledged the pandemic as the major inhibiting factor for pupil progress and school improvement. Whilst they identified the following areas for some consideration, in some cases they were also keen to offer constructive suggestions as to how to mitigate them.

In addition to the Board, funding was also raised as an issue for other interviewees, not as related to the WP but as impact on provision from tight budgets, e.g. getting staff cover, to let people out of school to visit other schools. A common perception was, “To release teachers to see other classes, not going to have a major impact in the immediate but will in the long run.” (Primary PT, as in quote below)

Similarly, practitioners raised issues relating to secondments. In the past turnover of WS Leads, has led to lack of pace, continuity, and coherence of activity.

At times, negotiating release time from class for those wanting to engage in the WP professional learning offer, some teachers saw twilight/after school WP activities as problematic for those colleagues who had domestic/family commitments.

On balance it seemed that practitioners preferred face-to-face meetings for interaction and professional dialogue; collaborative opportunities for visiting other schools was one of the key features identified in enabling impact.

Confidential Draft

The time commitment required for the IOC programmes (one year) represents a large commitment. Participants understood the reasons for this, Masters level learning etc. but were keen to explore how this might be "broken down" into small units of engagement.

Communication and information flow, especially to teachers and schools was also an area for development. This was deemed to have an impact on the "reach" of the WP. While our survey findings[5] indicate that a majority of respondents (55%) indicated having a good knowledge of the West Partnership and also having been involved in activities and/or programmes supported by the RIC, 14% of individuals had heard of the WP but didn't know very much about it and 4% indicated that they hadn't heard of the West Partnership until receiving the survey.

Some school-based interviewees, suggested that access to IT hardware and software, including problems with accessing Glow, had hindered their engagement with WP activities. A further common theme highlighted by survey respondents that while there was developing impact from the West Partnership activities, more time and sustained effort was needed to move innovation to scale and sustain developments and impact. A primary Principal Teacher outlined the difficulty in getting teachers released from school to undertake CLPL:

> *I think we would need to have staff that would be able to cover to release people… extra staff we do have in schools, is being used to raise attainment and it's quite scrutinised, so you want to make the most of that and actually working with children with those staff. It's difficult because obviously freeing up staff to upskill teachers… would benefit teaching and learning, but I think because you are having to justify… what you are doing with your good money... I think you are resistant to let staff out to go and see other classes, because that's not going to have a major impact, it will in the long run but it's not that immediate impact… I don't know whether an option or maybe doing the training and doing the kind of project intervention thing without having that write up in the end, you probably wouldn't get your Master's credits for it, but is an option where you are still getting quite a lot of impact from it… the massive workload isn't there as well… I would just say the workload was heavy along with doing a full time job, and if you have got any other commitments like family and things out with, it was a lot.*

[5] We need to add a note of caution here, as indicated in our survey report in Appendix A, regarding the lack of statistical significance due to sample size (n=472).

Confidential Draft

From a local authority/specialist perspective

One issue was raised in relation to the Curriculum group/WS where the LO was leading and coordinating the group but had to leave due to end of their secondment period. This was viewed as detrimental to progress of the group(s) as new secondees come in, without any knowledge of the history or prior knowledge of the group and therefore took time to bed into their new role.

Again, releasing teachers from routine school commitments or getting support staff out of schools was seen to be a challenge due to lack of `backfill`. Interviewees also pointed to relatively high rate of staff illness which puts pressure on HTs when trying to release staff. It was also reported that certain types of professional learning require to be face-to-face for some specialist staff, rather than online e.g. conferences and courses. One LA Head of Service referred to the issue with the secondee model and its impact on WP WSs:

> *I think there are some interesting things coming out of the curriculum group and we…I think we've agreed a, kind of, refocus…the challenge is going to be though that because we have that…not constant, but that changeover from somebody like the WS Lead Officer to somebody else, you know, somebody else has got to come in pick it up… although we're all there as the core group, but after we've met, it's that individual person who redrives things forward, and I think she did that really well, and I think we definitely have made steps forward as a group in trying to identify what it is that we need to focus on… and so the problem I find is that it's that communication and information flow. There's so much coming at my headteachers…*

In summary the key inhibitors to `impact` were: the uncertainty created by timing and amount of funding, and the political context including the national reform agenda and the forthcoming RIC review. In addition, the role, and responsibilities of ES`s Regional Improvement Team required clarification; there were challenges in relation to staff cover to release practitioners for professional learning activity and the communication and information flow between WP, LAs and schools was potentially inhibiting reach to teachers. The scalability of initiatives was identified as another challenge.

Confidential Draft

4. Reflections on Progress

The evidence provided in section three indicates that there has been substantial progress regarding impact of the WP objectives at school and classroom level. The interview and survey data strongly indicate that teachers' engagement with the WP has enhanced their professional learning, enabling them to have a positive impact on children and young people's learning. There is also evidence that practitioner and other professionals' engagement with WP has impacted the classroom, school and across local authorities. Here, WP staff and local authority officers have been important actors facilitating knowledge mobilisation and networking. In addition, WP professional learning programmes have facilitated the sharing of knowledge across the Partnership for benefit of children and young people.

However, as one might expect progress is not uniform across WP and there is healthy recognition that traction takes time, particularly given the size of the partnership and range of challenges that local authorities and their communities are currently experiencing. The recovery from the pandemic and its lasting impact on staffing and the needs of children and young people are major disruptive factors affecting all system change and educational improvement efforts, not just those of WP. Nevertheless, it is striking, given such challenges, that this evaluation has identified continued positive impact of the WP, including improving teachers' professional skills which is being translated into positive outcomes for CYP.

There was consensus across those interviewed that the WP activity and systems has promoted collaboration and partnership working at strategic and operational levels in LAs and within and across schools and across sectors. Importantly, the WP is reported to have promoted networked learning, sharing of practice and resources across the local authorities.

A key driver in promoting cross-authority working and school partnership has been programmes such as the IOC/D/S programmes, Thinking About Headship, the Early Years work, Pedagogy for All programme and Curriculum: Learning and Teaching Cycle and the Curriculum Groups, including assessment and moderation activity and West OS.

Data-informed systems, tools and resources developed across the Partnership have also played a role in fostering collaboration and impact. This includes a focused

Confidential Draft

attainment, achievement database that will be shared across all local authorities. Practitioners also highlighted the Early Years self-evaluation tool as being very impactful. This was collaboratively produced between the WP LAs and then shared with EY Centres and LA colleagues. This included training, action plans, trackers and stakeholder surveys.

The WP has also been successful in promoting networks that support specialist or specific fields. For example, to the WP's ESOL activity, has facilitated the bringing together of people with specialist knowledge to ideas, expertise and resources. This was seen to be particularly important for those LAs without such specialists in specific ESOL provision and demonstrates the 'value-added' support that the WP contributes to the system,

As schools reopened after the pandemic practitioners have greatly valued the WP facilitation of school visits and associated networked learning for teachers and mentors, especially in IOC/D/S This enhanced networking has also included QIOs working with their peers across authorities and engaging in professional dialogue with colleagues at different levels to share ideas, gain different perspectives and ways of working. The cross-sectoral working promoted by the WP activity has also supported the mobilisation of new ways of thinking and working such as whole-school strategies that secondary school colleagues particularly valued.

Overall, interviewee's comments highlight that the improved collaboration facilitated by the Partnership has not only contributed to the mobilisation of knowledge and expertise, but also built networks with the power to inform and enhance classroom practice and impact positively on children and young people.

While the WP has clearly enhanced and expanded the partnership working across and within the authorities, there continue to be challenges that threaten the sustainability of these network developments. Interviewees highlighted the challenge of finding time for school visits and cover for those teachers released from school, particularly if more than one member of staff from a school was involved in the activity. Participants in the IOC programme very much welcomed the protected time for professional learning.

The ideal situation for the WP is universal recognition by LAs of the available opportunities afforded by the partnership. There is evidence to suggest that some local authorities have taken longer to engage with the WP offer, but these LAs are now

Confidential Draft

promoting the WP support and recognising their added value. Some WP initiatives and programmes appear to be driving increased engagement. For example, IOC was developed in Glasgow for the Glasgow City Council, but the programme has become popular across the WP.

The evidence gathered for this evaluation report indicates that the 'reach' of the WP has improved in terms of teachers across the RIC being aware and able to engage in WP activity. At the strategic and leadership level, there is a belief that most teachers are aware and can engage with WP activity if it is seen as beneficial and offers something beyond what their local authority offers. Practitioners, however, indicate that two perspectives are common: one that mirrors this strategic perception, but another that is less well informed of the offer and sees the WP provision for "others" and leaders. These perceptions, suggest that communications and messaging require further development. Here, the role of the school leadership and local education officers was highlighted in helping to convey the WP offer and accurate information about the nature of its support.

As more participants become engaged in the various core WP programmes such as IOC, it is also likely that word of mouth will help promote the WP offer. There are a growing number of practitioners who have participated in IOC programmes who appear to be creating a 'ripple effect' in departments and schools. This would appear to be gaining traction, with 750 practitioners signed up for the current academic year and the IOS and IOD positioned to replicate the success of IOC more broadly across the system. A similar potential exists across those practitioners who have undergone practitioner enquiry projects since the inception of the WP and as reported in our previous report, there is now a growing cadre of HTs with expertise enquiry-based approaches across the system.

The findings also highlighted how important networking can be in communicating the WP offer. It is likely that as this networking builds capacity at school and partnership level, staff will become empowered to further engage colleagues in WP activity. Such individuals or groups could become leaders of professional learning and research and liaise with WP officers to help promote systematic engagement. The importance of embedded research capacity in schools and its facilitation has been highlighted in the literature (e.g.: Greenwood and Abbott, 2001; Muijs and Reynolds, 2011; Cordingley,

Confidential Draft

2015; Lowden *et al.*, 2019). Building in this self-evaluating, enquiry-informed reflexive culture is known to support the development of networks as effective learning systems (Peurach 2016).

The accounts of teachers and others presented in this evaluation indicate that the various WP professional learning programmes have been impactful. This is perhaps to be expected given what we know of models of effective practice in the literature and the fact that the WP professional learning reflects this evidence. WP programmes are content focused, incorporate active learning strategies, engage teachers in collaboration, use modelling, provide coaching and expert support, allow appropriate time for planning, feedback and reflection and are of sustained duration. These characteristics reflect those identified in meta-analyses of research on effective professional learning approaches (e.g.: (Darling-Hammond *et al*, 2017; Desimone, 2009). The WP professional learning and resources are also based on a collaborative model of improvement (Chapman and Hadfield, 2010; Hargreaves, 2021; Chapman and Ainscow, 2022) that align teaching strategies to CYP' needs and curriculum design, this again reflects models of effective professional learning (CUREE, 2012).

The overall WP strategy of creating a networked learning system underpinned by collaboration across different types of boundaries and systematic enquiry and evidence building (Madrid Miranda and Chapman, 2021) is now yielding dividends and are worth of future investment, especially in times of financial austerity.

Confidential Draft

5. Conclusion

The findings from this evaluation report suggest that the WP is making very good progress in supporting improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in educational establishments and promoting positive outcomes of children and young people. While the degree of progress varies across establishments and LAs, it must be recognised that such ambitious and large-scale systems change will take time. The current findings and those of previous evaluation reports, the direction of travel and trajectory of WP are very positive. Furthermore, the strategies and approaches adopted by WP have been agile enough to flex to the changing demands of a rapidly evolving context. This was particularly evident in its rapid adaptation to meet the huge challenges imposed by COVID-19.

Given the relatively low levels of resource available to WP, the return on investment is substantial. However, the WP will need to continue adapt and evolve, not only to the diminishing public funding in the system, but also to the emerging policy landscape. On the one hand the educational reform agenda is ambitious and complex. Whilst on the other hand many of the educational policy priorities remain unchanged with a focus on CfE and equity, for example. This creates a maintenance-development dilemma; the WP will need to continue to be agile to optimise opportunities and to continue to draw on and develop robust self-review mechanisms to optimise activity. The WP has already recognised the diverse and complex nature of these challenges and the partnership has been particularly innovative in its approaches and programmes including the use of technology to support developments and ensure impact.

Confidential Draft

References

Bell, I., Hall, S., and Lowden, K. (2022) *Reflections on the West Partnership Recovery to Renewal: Reimagining the Future.* Internal report. University of Glasgow

Bell. I., Hall, S., and Lowden, K. (2023) *WP Interim Evaluation Report, Phase 1 Defining and Understanding Impact.* Internal report. University of Glasgow

Chapman, C., & Ainscow, M. (2022). *Educational Equity: Pathways to Success* Routledge.

Chapman, C. and Hadfield, M. (2010), Supporting the middle tier to engage with school-based networks: change strategies for influencing and cohering. *Journal of Educational Change,* 11(3), pp. 221-240.

Cordingley, P. (2015). The contribution of research to teachers' professional learning and development. *Oxford review of education*, *41*(2), 234-252.

CUREE (2012). *Understanding what enables high quality professional Learning: A report on the research evidence*. CUREE

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute

Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational researcher*, *38*(3), 181-199.

Ferreira, J., Evans, N., Davis, J., and Stevenson, R. (2019) Learning to Embed Sustainability in Teacher Education. Springer Briefs in Education . Springer, Singapore.

Fullan, M. (2006). The future of educational change: system thinkers in action. J Educ Change 7, 113–122.

Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (2012). Reviving teaching with 'professional capital'. *Education Week*, *31*(33), 30-36.

Greenwood, C, R., and Abbott, M. (2001) The Research to Practice Gap in Special Education. Teacher Education and Special Education. 2001;24(4):276-289.

Hargreaves, A. (2021). Teacher collaboration: 30 years of research on its nature, forms, limitations and effects. *Policy, Teacher Education and the Quality of Teachers and Teaching*, 103-121.

Confidential Draft

Lowden, K., Hall, S., Bravo, A., Orr, C. and Chapman, C. (2019) *Knowledge Utilisation Mapping Study: Scottish Education System. Final report*. Social Research series. Scottish Government. Edinburgh. ISBN 978-1-83960-086-9

Madrid Miranda, R. and Chapman, C. (2021) Towards a network learning system: reflections on a university initial teacher education and school-based collaborative initiative in Chile. *Professional Development in Education*, (doi: 10.1080/19415257.2021.1902840) (Early Online Publication)

Markow, D., Macia, L., & Lee, H. (2013). Challenges for school leadership: A survey of teachers and principals. *The Met Life Survey of the American Teacher*.

Muijs D and Reynolds D (2011) Effective Teaching: Evidence and Practice (3rd ed). Los Angeles, CA: Sage

Peurach, D. J., Glazer, J. L., & Winchell Lenhoff, S. (2016). The developmental evaluation of school improvement networks. *Educational Policy*, *30*(4), 606-648.

Confidential Draft

Appendix

Technical Report: Evaluation Methodology and Survey Findings

1. Evaluation Design and Methodology

This report is the final of three over the year 2022-2023. A mixed methods research design has been adopted to collect data and evidence to address the evaluation objectives and key research questions. The evaluation was designed is structured in three broad overlapping phases:

Phase 1 *Understanding and Defining Impact*, (October 2022-February 2023), within the WP. Our findings on defining and understanding impact from Phase 1 informed the design of survey questions, distributed in Phase 2.

Phase 2: *Engagement and Demonstrating Impact,* (February-May 2023), the main aim of this phase was to gauge 'reach', engagement and differences made or impact from such engagement, through a survey created from the findings from Phase1. The findings from the online survey are reported in the following report, insert title, and the final Phase 3.

Phase 3: *Cases of Impact: Insights and Learning,* (May-July 2023), provide insight into definitions and criteria for impact across the WP and the effects on its main stakeholders from WP involvement. The main aim of the final phase is to address the research questions fully and provide insight into definitions/criteria of 'impact' across the WP and the effects on main stakeholders from WP involvement. This was achieved by synthesising the findings from Phase 1 and 2.

Methodology

The research team adopted a mixed-method approach, using quantitative and qualitative techniques to address the key research questions outlined below. This evaluation report represents the combined results for both the qualitative strand of our research methodology, and our quantitative approach by survey. These complement other evidence gathered previously, including a quantitative survey of classroom/establishment practitioners and senior leadership teams (SLT) to assess the effectiveness of collaboration and related enquiry across the West Partnership in 2019. Those findings were reported in the *West Partnership Conditions for Change Interim Highlights Report* (December 2019). In addition, qualitative research

Confidential Draft

conducted in 2021 to evaluate process and impact of the WP since its inception in 2018, resulted in the *West Partnership Interim Evaluation Report* and a summary report*, Progress & Challenge: Reflections on the Development of the West Partnership 2018-2020*, (February 2021). *The Reflections on the West Partnership Recovery to Renewal: Reimagining the Future* Report (August 2022) considered the WP response to the pandemic through its Interim Action Plan. This was supplemented with a summary report: *The West Partnership Back to the Future.* Our Phase 1 report: *WP Interim Evaluation Report, Phase 1: Defining and Understanding Impact* (February 2023) underpins this one, by defining and understanding impact through the lens of the WP key stakeholders.

Qualitative methods have included gathering primary and secondary data from a range of relevant sources within and out with the West Partnership. Primary data has mainly been gathered from a range of practitioners, and other key stakeholders in the partnership. The major source of primary data for this report is a series of in-depth interviews conducted from June – August 2023, with WP board directors, school-based practitioners, LA Officers and specialist professionals. Other data has been collected by ethnographic notetaking, and observation at online professional learning events and face-to-face professional dialogue with workstream leads.

The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and content analysed using thematic coding.

The interviewees for phase 3 by Local Authority are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Interviewees by Local Authority

Local Authority	Number
East Dunbartonshire	6
Glasgow City	6
West Dunbartonshire	5
East Renfrewshire	3
Inverclyde	2
Renfrewshire	2
South Lanarkshire	2
North Lanarkshire	0
Total	**26**

Confidential Draft

Interviewees by sector and position are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Interviewees by sector and position

Education sector	Position	Number
Early Years	Depute Head Teacher	1
Primary	Depute Head Teacher/ Head Teacher	2
	Principal Teacher	6
	Class Teacher	3
Secondary	Depute Head Teacher/ Head Teacher	2
	Principal Teacher	1
	Class Teacher	2
Local Authority	Officers/Specialists	5
West Partnership	Board Director	4
Total		**26**

Confidential Draft

2. WP Evaluation: Summary of Survey Findings

Introduction

Aim of Evaluation – To address the two related research objectives: to "what extent our programmes and workstreams are now reaching into schools and classrooms and, ultimately, impacting on children, young people and families." (Underpinned by six key research questions)

This summary provides a snapshot of Phase 2 and 3 headline findings from the ROC external evaluation of the WP conducted from March to August of this year, as follow-up to Phase 1 evaluation activity, (Understanding and Defining Impact). There was some slight slippage of Phase 2 activity due to request from the WP to keep the online survey open longer than anticipated to boost response rate. This had a knock-on effect into Phase 3, but it also it took much longer to recruit practitioner interviewees than anticipated. The survey report will be included in the final Phase 3 report.

Phase 2 – Engagement and Demonstrating Impact - Online Survey.

The findings which follow are a sample of the survey results.

The focus of the survey was on impact and respondents were asked several questions regarding their engagement with aspects of the partnership work and its subsequent impact on their practice and the families they worked with.

Demographics

472 individuals responded to the survey. Of those, 92% worked full-time and 8% worked part-time. Almost three-quarters of those who completed the survey (73%) were over 40 suggesting a preponderance of experienced respondents in the survey. The overwhelming majority of responses (85%) were from staff working in educational establishments. Headteachers comprised the single largest group (157/33%) of respondents. Again, this underlines the large number of career experienced individuals in the survey. Class teachers were the second largest group at 31% (145).

Almost half of the responses (49%) were from staff in Primary schools with just over a quarter (27%) from the Secondary sector. These figures include ASN staff. Early years establishments returned relatively few responses (8%).

Confidential Draft

The largest number of responses (30%) was from Glasgow City and the smallest number (1%) was from Inverclyde. Table 3 illustrates each authority's responses and how they correspond to their `total RIC teaching staff`.

Table 3: Local authority responses

Establishment type	Number	Percentage	*Percentage of total RIC teaching staff
Glasgow City	140	30	30
Renfrewshire	108	23	9
West Dunbartonshire	63	14	5
North Lanarkshire	48	10	19
East Renfrewshire	42	9	7
East Dunbartonshire	31	7	7
South Lanarkshire	28	6	18
Inverclyde	5	1	4
Total	**465**	**100**	**100**

*Local Authority percentage of total RIC teaching staff. Scottish Government 2022

Knowledge of the West Partnership

A majority of respondents (55%) indicated having a good knowledge of the West Partnership and also having been involved in activities and/or programmes supported by the RIC. 27% had some knowledge of the WP and awareness of its work but had not been directly involved with it. However, there was still some indication of individuals (18%) having little or no knowledge of the Partnership. (`I have heard about the WP, but I don't know very much about it`, (14%), `I hadn't heard of the WP until this survey`, (4%).

Involvement with WP Initiatives and Relevance to Practice

The majority of respondents who engaged with current West Partnership initiatives found the experience 'somewhat relevant' or 'very relevant' to their practice. The survey asked about individual involvement in a number of current West Partnership supported initiatives and about the relevance of the experience to their practice. For all nine initiatives almost all of those responding found the experience either 'somewhat relevant' or 'very relevant'. Accounting for, for example;

Confidential Draft

- 95% of those taking part in ‘Curriculum & learning, teaching & assessment’ sessions, (C.L.T. & A.)
- 94% of those taking part in West OS,
- 92% engaging with the FOCUS Tool,
- 91% of those taking part in Collaborative Enquiry, (CE)
- 90% of those taking part in Improving our classrooms/ schools/ departments sessions, (IOC…) and
- 90% of those taking part in Supporting Learners including Career-long Professional Learning, (SLiCLPL).

Moreover, in seven out of the nine initiatives a majority of responses identified the experience as ‘very relevant’ to their practice: C.L.T. & A., IOC…, FOCUS, CE, Participation in a Specialist Network, Leadership, Empowerment and Improvement and SLiCLPL.

Impact of the West Partnership

There was some evidence to indicate that engagement with West Partnership work was having a sustainable impact on many respondents’ practice. Respondents were invited to choose from a 28 item pre-coded question which sought to gauge impact on a wide range of areas and aspects of practice. On 25 of the 28 presented items a clear majority of responses indicated that engagement with the West Partnership initiative was having ‘some sustainable impact’ or a ‘major sustainable impact’.

A quarter or more of responses identified the West Partnership as having a ‘major sustainable impact’ on 12 areas. These are the `top` six: Professional knowledge (31%); Professional confidence (29%); Ability to reflect critically on my practice (29%); Sharing practice with colleagues (28%); Professional skills (27%) and Wider networking (across authorities) (26%).

Impact on CYP, Parents and Carers

There was some evidence to indicate that professional engagement with West Partnership work was beginning to have a sustainable impact on the CYP and/or carers that respondents were working with. Respondents were invited to choose from a 13 item pre-coded question which sought to gauge impact on work with CYP and carers. On nine of the 13 presented items a clear majority of responses indicated that engagement with the West Partnership initiative was having ‘some sustainable impact’ or a ‘major sustainable impact’.

Confidential Draft

A majority of responses indicated 'some sustainable impact' or 'major sustainable impact' on the following: Attainment (69%); Engagement (67%); Achievement (65%); Knowledge (64%); Skills for learning (62%); Confidence (60%); Health and wellbeing (59%); Skills for life (57%) and Skills for work (52%).

Examples from practice of sustained impact

Respondents were asked to provide examples of how West Partnership supported work had positively impacted on CYP.

- By far the most commonly reported examples were descriptions of how the professional learning activities and resources had enhanced practitioners' pedagogy skills and curriculum design which had then promoted learner achievement and engagement. The IOC courses were particularly highly praised for their relevance and providing ideas that were readily translated into effective practice.
- Enhancing the curriculum to better reflect CYP' needs was another prominent theme, with respondents highlighting how WP events and programmes had promoted their and their colleagues' professional knowledge and empowered them to innovate and put the learner at the centre of the curriculum and developing coherent learning pathways.
- Another theme in the open responses concerned how participating in WP programmes had promoted self-reflection and greater use of evidence to enhance practice and promote positive learner outcomes. This included greater professional dialogue and critical reflection informed by school-based evidence, drawing on research findings, through to involvement in collaborative action research/ enquiry activity. Respondents' comments included a notable theme that pupils were benefiting from research informed practice leading to improvements in attainment and achievement.
- The open-ended responses also demonstrated how the West Partnership activity has promoted greater professional dialogue, collaboration and networking within and across schools, including cross local authority partnership working. This led to the sharing of ideas and learning that positively impacted on teachers' practice and learner outcomes.
- Another notable theme in the open-ended responses was the positive impact the West Partnership activities has had on Leadership skills. This included the Into Headship Sessions, which were praised for developing school leaders' skills and ability to focus on strategic decisions and School Improvement Planning that positively impacted at whole school level.
- Other examples of how West Partnership supported activity had made a sustained positive impact included enhancing assessment procedures,

Confidential Draft

supporting CYP to prepare for life after school and promoting more effective parental engagement and family learning strategies.

Overall progress of the West Partnership work

Almost two thirds of responses (63%) indicated that the West Partnership work was either 'beginning to make a positive difference' or was 'making a considerable positive difference to the practice of teachers and learner outcomes'.

Key Enablers/Features:

- Observing the impact of West Partnership colleagues' professional learning skills on classroom practice and learner outcomes.
- Having access to programmes of quality professional learning and associated resources that is not always available locally.
- The relevance of the West Partnership activities and resources to their work and its applicability to classroom practice.
- Practitioner informed professional learning supported by evidence facilitates translation into classroom practice.
- The enhanced opportunity for meaningful collaboration and knowledge mobilisation across schools and local authorities as the West Partnership facilitates networking and partnership working.
- The quality of content and presentations which inspired and motivated practitioners.
- Having input of research from academic sources to complement insights gained from practitioner experience and knowledge.
- Promoting whole school change facilitated and supported by school leaders drawing on West Partnership supported ideas and innovation.
- The effective use of digital systems and resources by West Partnership colleagues to reach practitioners and school leaders which complemented an increase in digital approaches in schools.

Key Challenges/What Worked Less Well:

- The most common theme was a reported lack of awareness about the West partnership and its various offers among practitioners, primarily classroom teachers rather than educational leaders. One teacher's comments indicate that the scale and pace of local authority involvement has occurred at different speeds across the Partnership. This is perhaps not unusual as this `involvement` is led and managed at school level, with SLTs identifying priorities and corresponding CLPL.

Confidential Draft

- These factors were compounded by a third issue, namely the reported limited time available to participate in professional learning activities, because of already busy local CLPL diaries and reactivity required by the respective local authorities. Some teachers also saw twilight/ after school timing for WP activities as problematic for those colleagues who had caring commitments.
- Another common theme highlighted that while there was developing impact from the West Partnership activities, more time and sustained effort was needed to move innovation to scale and sustain developments and impact.
- Finally, several respondents highlighted that IT issues such as unreliable or unavailable technology or a lack of access to Glow, had seriously limited their access to the WP offer.

Confidential Draft