

Supporting children during COVID-19

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Aim: Using Quality Improvement Methodology to support vulnerable children and young people affected by poverty and disadvantage emotionally and academically during COVID19.

Rationale

Due to Covid-19 schools, early learning centres and childcare facilities in Scotland were closed, with the exception of critical provision for key workers and vulnerable children. A priority was to maintain engagement in learning with digital platforms offering a lifeline during these unprecedented times. We recognise that Quality Improvement Methodology accelerates improvements for children and young people and maximises our efforts. This rigorous and systematic approach when used effectively leads to sustainable change and improvement. COVID-19 presented uncertain times with dramatic and last minute changes. We wanted to ensure our response to this public health crisis was underpinned by a method that enabled us to exhaust and test change ideas, provide opportunity for reflection and a format for analysing and capturing our learning along the way. We acknowledged that COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for systems change; to reimagine services to inform our strategic thinking, providing better and more responsive services for our children and families.

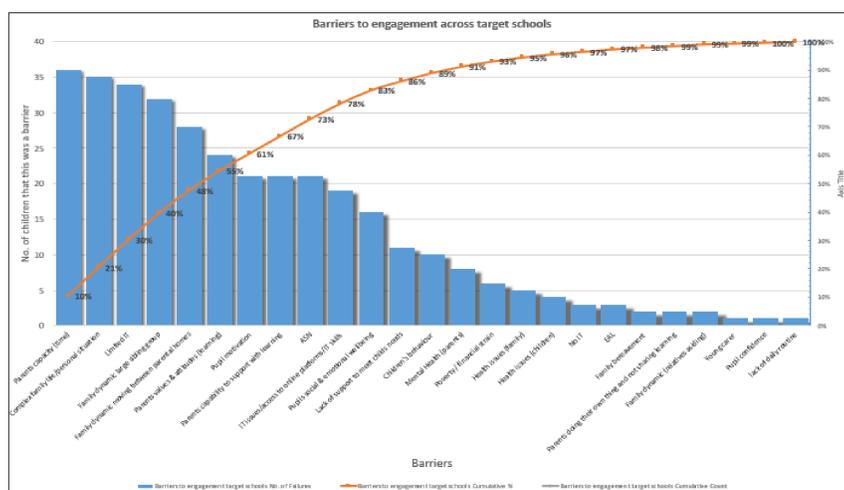
Method

- This work was supported by Fife Council's Improvement Coordinator and Fife's Scottish Government Improvement Advisor (CYPIC Team).
- Contacted and recruited 4 primary schools and 2 nurseries who already held some Quality Improvement (QI) knowledge and established improvement teams.
- Offered QI coaching support through weekly virtual calls.
- Quality Improvement tools i.e. driver diagrams, pareto charts, run charts helped us understand our system and plan our improvement work.



- Agreed our operational definition of pupil engagement. This allowed us to collect robust data and identify any improvements made.
- Participating schools/nurseries had clear improvement aims, measures and were actively testing change ideas to support vulnerable children and families.
- Pupil engagement was tracked daily for individual learners.
- Fife CYPIC colleagues offered a multiagency response to overcome barriers in a coordinated way.
- Pareto chart identified key barriers to home learning. Many of our vulnerable children and families faced multiple barriers.

Pareto is based on 4 target schools (n=201 pupils).
 9 classes- stages: P1 (2 classes); P2/3's (2 classes); P4; P5/6; P4/5/6/7 and P7 (2 classes).



Process Change



Key Learning Points

- Many of our vulnerable children and families are facing multiple barriers. COVID-19 has compounded existing barriers and created new challenges for families.
- A pivotal step was to agree an operational definition for 'pupil engagement' in order to be clear in terms of our improvement aim and measurement plan.
- Tracking pupil engagement daily provided an in-depth overview of engagement at a glance and helped us to **know** if any improvements had been made.
- Engagement was lower than expected and sporadic throughout the week. This prompted staff to contact families who they weren't initially concerned about.
- P7 engagement was lower than other stages.
- Different staff were receiving different responses from parents. Hierarchy and relationships influencing parents' honesty regarding their needs.
- Parents' perceptions surrounding expectations of home learning varied greatly with many families reporting they did not see it as a priority. Staff were reluctant to add pressure/challenge parents for fear of this having a detrimental impact.
- Potential for stronger handover between Class Teachers and staff at Children's Activity Centres (CAC) to ensure individuals' learning needs are met and where appropriate scaffolding for learning is in place.
- Providing IT equipment did not lead to an increase in pupil engagement for all targeted families.
- Some Children / Young People with IT were not engaging online because of anxieties, myths associated with virtual platforms.
- Restrictions surrounding video platforms resulted in missed opportunities for improvement.
- Direct contact with parents (email/phone) provided an opportunity to build rapport and mitigate barriers.
- Many parents reported Microsoft Teams was challenging and requested work to be emailed directly. Parents responded positively to this form of communication and this resulted in improved engagement.
- SaLT colleagues have been integral to engaging and supporting children with speech and language difficulties.