

Research-Practitioner Regional Hubs Project: *Briefing Document*

This is a briefing document of the *Research-practitioner Regional Hubs Project End of Year Report to the Project Steering Group*, presented October 2018.

The proof of concept year identified the following four key developmental areas to support the aims of the project:

1. Repository and Toolkit development
2. The Regional Research Hubs Development, Network Communications, and Protocols
3. Professional Development
4. External Communications

1. Repository and Toolkit development

To support and improve joined-up research development and evidence-based practice, the OL Repository will be the prime resource for five key areas:

1. An OL Toolkit that summarises research and evaluation for practice, to:
 - *Increase knowledge of OL practice and the supporting evidence*
 - *Support and strengthen evidence-based practice*
 - *Build and support links between research and evaluation and practice*
 - *Understand better resource needs and steps required to engage with each activity, and the known benefits of those activities*
 - *Increase knowledge of impact areas and the links between engaging in OL pursuits and developmental goals*
2. Previously unpublished reports, case studies and findings from small-scale research and evaluation
3. Information on data sets awaiting further evaluation and current and ongoing studies
4. Key reports, papers and information services that highlight central and devolved government priorities and opportunities
5. Key documents supporting regional action-research development and enhancing reflective practice

2. Regional Research Hubs support protocols

Based on participant feedback and experiences support protocols have been established. These include procedures for initial hub meetings and training and support for the local *Progression Exercise*, and *Project Overview* and *Steering* documents to support hub group direction and focus.

Further protocols are being developed to encourage and support submissions of unpublished evidence.

3. Professional development

To improve recognition and understanding of reflective practice, a resource of supporting evidence will be established within the OL Repository.

Practitioner Research Workshops are being developed to support and strengthen practitioner engagement with research and evaluation, reflective practice, and action-research project building, offering:

- Training in evaluation to support reflective practice
- Training in techniques such as data gathering, navigating ethics, building relevant researcher-practitioner partnerships, formulating funding proposals and writing case studies
- To provide specified training as requested

4. External Communications

The project blog and articles in the Horizons magazine were successful, stimulating feedback and interest from outside the current hubs network. These will continue to be used to inform a wider audience about the project and to facilitate the sharing of related research to interested parties.

Hub convener round-up emails are sent out every two months to share hub support information, new projects, key evidence, news from individual hub groups, and media updates.

Project Objectives

By the end of this next eight-month phase it is expected

- The OL Toolkit will be live with research for several key and priority practice-areas summarised
- The Repository will be live and contain: previously unpublished documents and information of datasets or practitioner-led projects awaiting research-partnerships, links to documents highlighting government priorities (central and devolved), and reports or papers supporting regional action-research development and enhancing reflective practice
- Practitioner research training workshops will be ready to launch
- External communications will have strengthened and increased, widening project reach

Key messages

Project Impact

- Five Regional Hub groups and two sub-groups, with one new hub group in development
- At least six OL providers working with researchers on small scale studies to inform practice
- Development of practitioner research training workshops and funding sought by new partnership
- A summary review of OL produced by the Central Research Hub (CRH) to provide evidence for the development of a practitioner-led project proposal
- Volunteer researcher meetings with local head teachers to discuss OL opportunities and individual school practical needs
- A literature review conducted by the Research Coordinator to provide the evidence base for a campaign to promote OL to Scottish schools organised by members of the Scottish regional hub
- Active hubs blog, and two articles published in Horizons magazine
- Interdisciplinary relations and practitioner-researcher links strengthened as a result of support through regional hubs
- Increased awareness and dissemination of experience and expertise between practitioners and researchers
- Progressive opportunities for OL identified on a regional basis with associated targets for research and development

The Offer from the Hub Groups

The Regional Research Hub groups are the project informants, supporting the Project and the Outdoor Citizens Campaign by:

- Providing a breadth and depth of conversation and engagement not captured elsewhere in the OL field
- Supporting, engaging and enhancing practitioner-researcher relations and building strong links between the disciplines
- Developing a shared typology
- Actively engaging in and developing reflective practice
- Supporting each other and making constructive use of the pool of experience and expertise available
- Gathering and sharing datasets, evaluation and case studies
- Articulating the current reach, capacity and progressive nature of OL practice in the region and identifying target areas for research development