

# Northern Alliance: Play Pedagogy Collaborative Enquiry Programme – Participant Handbook

Promoting Leadership through Enquiry &  
Collaboration

Sept 2023 – June 2024

For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators  
Do luchd-ionnsachaidh na h-Alba, le luchd-foghlaim Alba

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## Rationale

### Why play? Why now?

“Learning through play involves children learning deeply, leading to them gaining a wide range of skills and subject knowledge, and helping them to thrive as individuals while also contributing positively to the societies they live in”

[Learning through play- increasing impact, reducing inequality,](#)

*Lego Foundation 2021*

“Scotland’s curriculum places learners at the heart of education. At its centre are four fundamental capacities. These capacities reflect and recognise the lifelong nature of education and learning. They:

- recognise the need for all children and young people to know themselves as individuals and to develop their relationships with others, in families and in communities
- recognise the knowledge, skills and attributes that children and young people need to acquire to thrive in our interconnected, digital and rapidly changing world
- enable children and young people to be democratic citizens and active shapers of that world”

[Curriculum for Excellence Refreshed Narrative, 2019](#)

“We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to attack the ‘systems of inequity”

[Michael Fullan, 2020](#)

“Academics is not a primary intrinsic motivator for most students (nor even for many of the apparently successful ones). Wellbeing (purpose, meaning, belongingness, control, making a contribution) is of greater intrinsic interest, which in turn can lead to deeper academics.”

["The right drivers for whole system success" Michael Fullan 2019](#)

‘Play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development which seeks to improve play experiences for all children.’

[UNCRC in Realising the Ambition, 2020](#)

Play is intrinsic to the state we call childhood. We cannot imagine childhood without it. Research supports Play as children's learning: but also tells us that implementation lacks consistency and clarity across systems ( *Fesseha and Pyle in Wood, Chesworth 2019*)

This Collaborative Enquiry programme, developed in partnership between Education Scotland and the Northern Alliance, aims to increase, deepen and strengthen practitioner understanding of Play, improve clarity and consistency and build a culture of collaborative working across settings, schools and Local Authorities in the North of Scotland.

### Aim of the Programme

The Aim of the Play Pedagogy Collaborative Enquiry Programme is

***“To improve outcomes for children and young people by deepening and strengthening understanding of Play Pedagogy through a process of Collaborative Enquiry.”***

### Programme Overview

The Play Pedagogy Collaborative Enquiry Programme will run from September 2023 – June 2024.

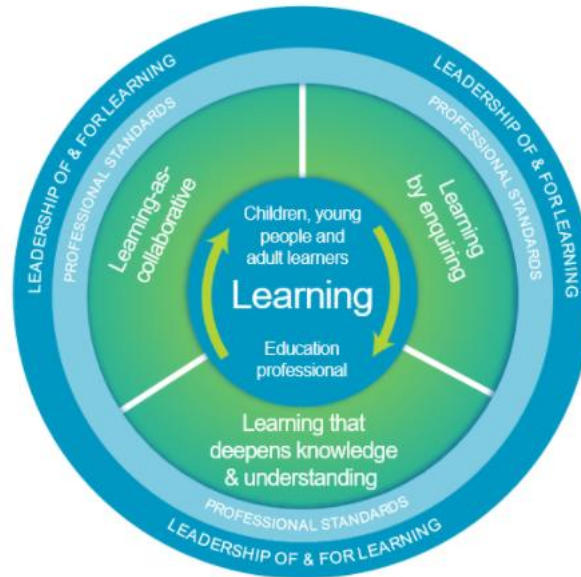
The programme is centred on the National Model for Professional Learning, which

- deepens knowledge and understanding;
- is underpinned by both research and Enquiry;
- Is informed by collaboration and discussion with other professionals.

This reflects the [GTCS Standards for Career-long Professional Learning](#):

"The professional commitment of teachers in Scotland is to lead learning through:

- developing deep knowledge of learning and teaching;
- critically examining how our teaching impacts on learners; and
- using evidence Collaboratively to inform teacher judgement and next steps for learners."



At the heart of the National Model for Professional Learning is the relationship between our learning, our learners' learning- and the impact they have on each other. These are deeply interconnected.

By the end of the programme, participants will be in a position to [independently apply for GTCS professional recognition](#) of a Play Pedagogy Collaborative Enquiry or [independently apply for an Open Badge](#) through the SSSC.

The programme is open to all practitioners within the Northern Alliance from Early Learning and Childcare, Primary and Secondary establishments.

Participants will decide on their own line of Enquiry in response to their own unique contexts and interests.

### Commitment

To take part in this programme, participants must have the support of their Line Manager. Establishment support should include:

- A commitment to developing play pedagogy approaches in the improvement plan.
- Time and cover to allow participants to attend all sessions in the programme outline.

## Supporting the Programme

### Mentors

Mentors will be providing one-to-one support to participants across the programme.

The role of the Mentor is to:

- Be the main point of contact for participants
- Meet with participants at least three times during the programme
- Support participants with processes of Enquiry, action planning and reflection
- Signpost participants to relevant professional learning and further reading
- Liaise with Programme Leads and Faculty Advisors

### Faculty Advisors- Audrey Buchanan, Anne Paterson and Lynn Taylor

Faculty Advisors will be providing specialist advice and guidance to Mentors and participants during the programme. Faculty Advisors will:

- Liaise with the Programme Leads to support the development of the training sessions for Mentors and introductory sessions.
- Attend relevant sessions to provide inputs and answer questions.

### Programme Leads – Kirsty Campbell, Heather Grant and Cheryl Sharp-Sturrock

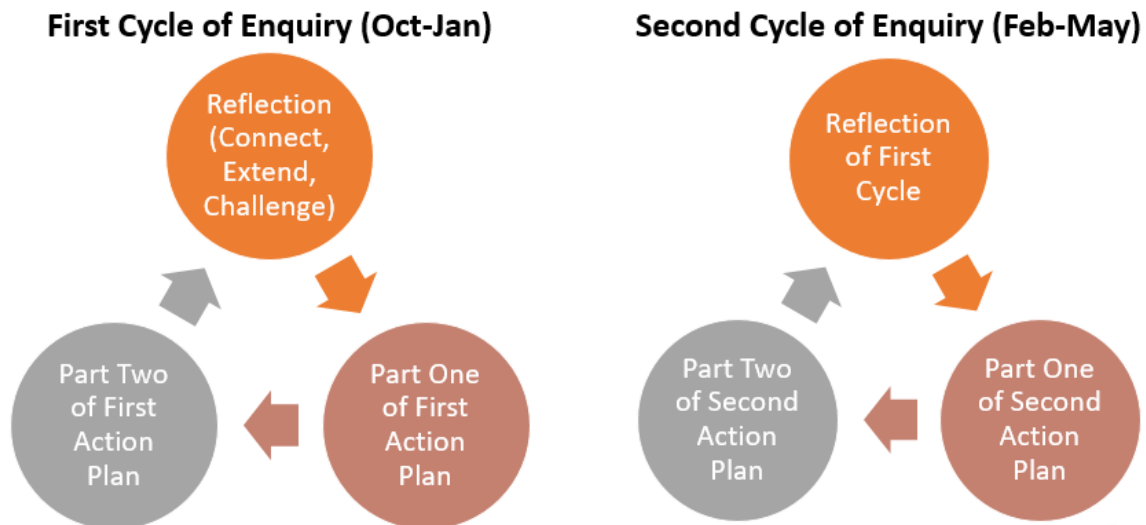
- The Programme Leads will coordinate and monitor the programme.

## Structure of the Programme

The programme consists of:

- Training sessions for Mentors (2)
- Introductory sessions for participants and Mentors (2)
- Timetabled one-to-one Mentor meetings in October/November, February, and May (3)
- Collaborative group sessions for participants in November, January, March, May and June (5)
- Mentor check-in sessions with the Programme Leads in December, March, and June (3)
- Engagement in independent professional reading.

The programme structure follows two cycles of Enquiry:



Please see the Programme Overview below for dates and session content.

Date/ Session Content/ Activity	Participants to Attend	Mentors to Attend	Faculty Advisors to Attend
<b>Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023 Mentor Training</b> (4pm-5.30pm) Session (Part One & Part Two)			Only Faculty Presenting at the session are required to attend
<b>Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (4pm – 5:30pm):</b> Mentor Training Session (Part Three & Part Four)			Only Faculty Presenting at the session are required to attend
<b>Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (4pm-5pm)</b> Intro Session 1 – Why? Exploring Play Pedagogy			
<b>Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (4pm – 5pm):</b> Intro Session 2 What? Overview of the Programme			
<b>Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (4pm – 5pm):</b> How? Anne Paterson – enquiry Previous participants sharing journeys			
<b>Oct/Nov 2023:</b> First check-in meeting between each participant and their Mentor to discuss initial thoughts, first cycle of Enquiry and develop part one of the action plan			
<b>Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023 (4pm – 5pm):</b> Collaborative Group Session 1: An opportunity			

for participants to get together with the Collaborative group to discuss each of the initial experiences of the enquiries; share ideas for moving forward; and discuss relevant professional reading or learning connected to the enquiries			
<b>Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (4pm – 5pm):</b> Mentor Check-in Session with Programme Leads: An opportunity for Mentors to come together and discuss progress with their one-to-one meetings and share relevant professional reading or learning connected to supporting colleagues to engage in critically reflective practice			(Optional, but encouraged)
<b>Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (4pm – 5pm):</b> Collaborative Group Session 2: An opportunity for participants to get together with the Collaborative group to discuss the experiences of the first cycles of Enquiry; share ideas for moving forward; and discuss relevant professional reading or learning connected to the enquiries			
<b>February 2024:</b> Second check-in meeting between each participant and their Mentor to discuss progress, reflect on the first cycle of Enquiry and start thinking about part one of the second cycle of Enquiry			
<b>Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (4pm-5pm):</b> Collaborative Group Session 3: An opportunity for participants to get together with the Collaborative group to discuss the experience of the second cycles of Enquiry; share ideas for moving forward; and discuss relevant professional reading or learning connected to the enquiries			
<b>Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (4pm – 5pm):</b> Mentor Check-in Session with Programme Leads: An opportunity for Mentors to come together and discuss progress with their one-to-one meetings and share relevant professional reading or learning connected to supporting colleagues to engage in critically reflective practice			(Optional, but encouraged)
<b>Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024:</b> Collaborative Group Session 4: An opportunity for participants to get together with the Collaborative group to discuss the second cycle of Enquiry; share ideas for moving forward; and discuss relevant professional reading or learning connected to the enquiries			

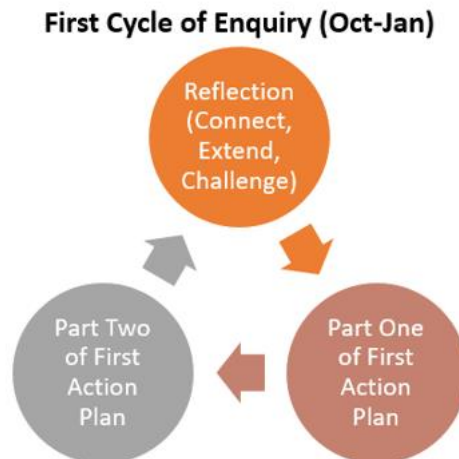


<p><b>May 2024:</b> Third check-in meeting between each participant and their Mentor to discuss findings from the second cycle of Enquiry and discuss capturing the findings for sharing in the digital case study</p>			
<p><b>Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (4pm-5pm)</b> Mentor Check-in Session with Programme Leads: An opportunity for Mentors to come together and discuss progress with their one-to-one meetings and share relevant professional reading or learning connected to supporting colleagues to engage in critically reflective practice</p>			(Optional, but encouraged)
<p><b>Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (4pm-5.30pm):</b> Final Collaborative Group Session 5 (Showcase): An opportunity for everyone to get together to share their findings, ideas and experiences from their enquiries (a celebration of the experiences of the programme)</p>			(Optional, but encouraged)

**NB:** A commitment to attending all the sessions highlighted in the mentor column is essential. Mentors will also be able to discuss with their participants whether they would like extra one-to-one meetings as the programme progresses.

## First Cycle of Enquiry

After the introductory sessions, participants will engage in a first cycle of Enquiry from October to January.



## Reflection Activity

“Connect, Extend, Challenge” (See Appendix A for template):

<b>Connect</b>	<b>Extend</b>	<b>Challenge</b>
What do participants already do?	Which new ideas are they considering?	What are the challenges?

## First Mentor Meeting

**The first Mentor meeting should focus on**

- Building the mentor – mentee relationship
- Connect- extend – challenge activity
- Exploring the line of Enquiry

**Following first Mentor meeting:**

- Using the template (See Appendix B) for the professional Enquiry framework, complete part one of the Action Plan.

## 28<sup>th</sup> November Collaborative Session

**At this Collaborative session, participants will join thematic groups sharing:**

- Themes of Collaborative Enquiry
- Professional reading
- Action plan progress

**Following the November Collaborative session participants should have:**

- Begun to implement the Action Plan
- Considered any changes to the Enquiry in the light of the session.

## 30<sup>th</sup> January Collaborative Session

Participants should complete part 2 of the Action plan prior to this session

**At this Collaborative session, participants will be sharing:**

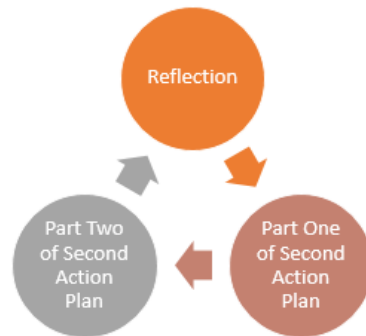
- Progress to date- what is working? What's not working? What's the learning?
- Professional reading
- The second cycle of Enquiry

**Following the January Collaborative session participants should:**

- Contact Mentors one week in advance with a brief outline agenda for the second meeting
- Consider any changes to the Enquiry in the light of the session.

## Second Cycle of Enquiry

### Second Cycle of Enquiry (Feb-May)



Following completion of the first cycle of Enquiry, participants will engage in a second cycle of Enquiry from February to May.

### Second Mentor Meeting

Participants and Mentors to agree agenda.

#### Following the second Mentor meeting:

- Complete the second part of the Action Plan using the template (Appendix B)

### 12<sup>th</sup> March Collaborative Group Session

**At this Collaborative session, participants will join thematic groups sharing:**

- Themes of Collaborative Enquiry
- Professional reading
- Action plan progress

**Following the March Collaborative session participants should:**

- Continue to implement the Action Plan
- Consider any changes to the Enquiry in the light of the session.

### 7<sup>th</sup> May Collaborative Group Session

Participants should complete part 2 of the Action plan prior to this session:

**At this Collaborative session, participants will be sharing:**

- Progress to date- What's working? What's not working? What's the learning?
- Professional reading
- Next steps following Enquiry
- Sharing professional learning through Sway (or another digital platform)

### Following this session participants should:

- Contact Mentors one week in advance with a brief outline agenda for the third meeting
- Consider any changes to the Enquiry in the light of the session.

### End of Enquiry

The end of the programme will give participants, Mentors and Faculty the opportunity to reflect and celebrate.

### Third Mentor Meeting

Participants and Mentors to agree agenda.

By the end of the third Mentor meeting, participants will have an idea of the content for the Sway (or other digital platform).

### Following the third Mentor meeting, participants should:

- Complete the professional learning SWAY (or other digital format) template sharing the Enquiry journey
- Submit the professional learning SWAY (or other digital format) to Programme Leads. **Deadline: 7th June 2024**

### 11<sup>th</sup> June Collaborative Session

**Participants will come together for the final time to celebrate and share learning around:**

- The Enquiry Process- Challenges and Opportunities
- Impact
- Collaboration
- Play Pedagogy

### Expectations for the Programme

#### Enquiry

#### Participants should

- Identify a line of Enquiry
- Complete the action plan in advance of the relevant Collaborative sessions
- Implement and reflect on the action plan

#### Independent Study

**Participants should** engage in Professional Reading.

## Tracking Progress

### Participants should

- Keep a private reflective log to support learning
- Submit a Sway (or other digital format) sharing the Enquiry journey.
- *Please be aware that this Sway (or other digital record) is a public document and it is the responsibility of participants to ensure that any material included must comply with Data Sharing and GDPR processes in their own Local Authority.*

## Mentor Meetings

### Participants should:

- Organise the second and third Mentor meetings
- Keep a brief minute of the meeting (**See Appendix C**) and share them with the Mentor.

### Mentors should:

- Organise the first Mentor meeting
- Coach and support participants
- Suggest Professional Reading and other resources where appropriate

## Further Reading

### Professional Enquiry

[The 'How' of Practitioner Enquiry | General Teaching Council for Scotland \(gtcs.org.uk\)](https://www.gtcs.org.uk)

[Standard-for-Career-Long-Professional-Learning.pdf \(gtcs.org.uk\)](#)

### Play Pedagogy

[Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot)

Contact details (participants to complete Mentor details)

Mentor:

Programme Enquiries:

Cheryl Sharp-Sturrock, Northern Alliance Well Being and Learning , Early Years

Lead: [cheryl.sharp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:cheryl.sharp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

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[Kirsty.Campbell@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Kirsty.Campbell@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

### Appendix A – Reflection Task

<b>Connect</b> What do you already do related to Play Pedagogy?	<b>Extend</b> What new ideas are you considering that could extend what you already do?	<b>Challenge</b> What are the challenges you may face?



# Appendix B – Professional Enquiry Action Plan Template

This [framework](#) was adapted by GTCS from a framework produced by Fearghal Kelly. The series of questions helps to prompt the actions at each stage of Enquiry.

<p><b>A framework adapted by GTCS from a framework produced by Fearghal Kelly.</b></p>	
	<p><b>Part One of the Action Plan</b></p>
<p><b><u>What's the problem?</u></b></p> <p>Define then redefine the problem - make sure what we think is the issue is the issue!</p> <p>How does it fit in?</p> <p>How does it relate to local and national curriculum and assessment policies?</p>	
<p><b><u>What is already known?</u></b></p> <p>Using <a href="#">Education Source - EBSCO</a> - literature review</p> <p>How will we tackle it?</p> <p><b>What are we actually going to do?</b></p>	

<p><b><u>How will we know what happened?</u></b></p> <p>How do we measure a change?</p> <p>What is the plan?</p> <p>What is the situation now?</p> <p><b>Implement the idea</b></p>	
	<b>Part Two of the Action Plan</b>
<p><b><u>What happened?</u></b></p> <p>What data did participants collect?</p> <p>What does that tell us?</p>	
<p><b><u>What have we learned?</u></b></p> <p>How are we going to change the practice?</p>	
<p><b><u>How will we share?</u></b></p> <p>Who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- needs to know?</li> <li>- would like to know?</li> <li>- can also learn from the Enquiry?</li> </ul>	

## Appendix C – Play Collaborative Enquiry 2021

Mentor name:

Date:

Mentee name:

Outstanding Actions from previous meeting & Comments:

What is working well?

Any challenges?

Follow up?

Mentee Signature

Mentor Signature