

Community Learning and Development in Curriculum for Excellence: 1. Senior Phase

Contents

01 | Introduction

02 | Review methodology

03 | How well do partners in the learning community jointly plan and evaluate *Senior Phase* learning activities?

04 | What are the key challenges faced in progressing effective partnership working in the learning community?

05 | What difference is partnership working having in increasing and improving learning opportunities for young people?

06 | How effective is support for young people who have either disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education? What difference is this having on the lives of young people?

07 | Recommendations

1. Introduction

Community Learning and Development (CLD) partners have a valuable contribution to make to the planning and delivery of *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) both in and out of school. This is the first in a series of reports which captures the contribution made by CLD partners to CfE. In doing so, it identifies strengths and areas for improvement.

Building the Curriculum 3 clearly sets out expectations in terms of roles and contributions of partners:

*“Meeting the ambitions for this curriculum involves pre-school centres and schools working in **learning partnerships** with colleges, universities, employers, partner agencies, youth work and the voluntary sector to provide a **coherent package of learning and support** based around the individual learner and in the context of local needs and circumstances” (Page six Building the Curriculum 3 -a framework for learning and teaching (Scottish Government, 2008)*

Since 2008 as part of learning community inspections HM Inspectors have taken a keen interest in how CLD partners contribute to the delivery of learning for young people.

In 2014 Education Scotland were asked by the CfE Management Board to take a closer look at how CLD partners contribute to joint planning and evaluation in delivering the *Senior Phase*.

In particular the focus of interest was:

- How well do partners in learning communities jointly plan and evaluate *Senior Phase* learning activities together?
- What difference is partnership working having in increasing and improving learning opportunities for young people?
- What are the key challenges faced in progressing effective partnership working in the learning community?
- How effective is support for young people who have either disengaged or are risk of disengaging from education? What difference is this having on the lives of young people?

2. Review methodology

Between the period September – December 2014 a range of evidence was gathered by HM Inspectors relating to the above areas of interest. This included evidence from 12 Learning Community inspections, 3 secondary school only inspections, across 11 authorities and information gathered as part of a programme of 50 secondary school visits focusing on CfE.

In addition a Creative Conversation event focused on “A joint approach to self-evaluation in the Senior Phase” was held on 26th November 2014. Over 60 participants including schools and CLD services, staff from Scottish Government, Education Scotland, 3rd sector and national youth work organisations actively engaged in professional dialogue.

The following summarises the key points identified in the review.

The Findings

3. How well do partners in the learning community jointly plan and evaluate *Senior Phase* learning activities?

HM Inspectors found that a wide range of partnership structures operate. Furthermore, membership of the partnerships varies and there is not a consistent picture of involvement across the country. The main partners were secondary schools, CLD services, Skills Development Scotland, Further Education (FE) colleges, active schools/sports services, Police and local primary schools. Third sector and local organisations, Health Services and other council services also feature within local partnerships. To a lesser extent Job Centre Plus, local businesses, volunteer centres, community safety, Higher Education (HE), were identified as partners.

Joint planning and evaluation relating to the *Senior Phase* presents a mixed picture. Whilst partnership working to improve outcomes is high on everyone's agenda the approach and structure of partnerships varies across the country. Most authorities have specific partnership groups focusing on positive destinations *Opportunities for All*. Joint planning and evaluation in this area of positive destinations is identified as an emerging strength. In areas such as *Opportunities for All* partners are actively engaged in joint planning and evaluation. There is a clear understanding of respective roles, shared vision and agreed outcomes. Partners use consistent approaches such as the matrix on 16+ to identify young people at risk of a non-positive destination. These approaches are consistent across authorities. In Edinburgh for example every secondary school has a 16+ co-ordinating group led by a deputy head teacher and includes CLD, employability services and voluntary organisations. In Dundee CLD partners are continuing to develop a learning partnership model which focuses on the whole community. This is bringing together key partners (CLD, Education, Health, FE/HE and Voluntary Sector) in the development of learning opportunities within a defined ward area.

HM Inspectors found that needs identification and planning works best when operational staff add their local knowledge and intelligence to available statistical information. Effective needs identification tends to be focussed around and/or identified through specific projects which have clear agreed outcomes. However out-with specific initiatives such as *Opportunities for All* many local partnerships operate through informal networks rather than as part of any structured approach. Identification of need is ad hoc, personality based and not systematically working to progress shared outcomes. HM Inspectors found that in many cases partners bring issues they are aware of rather than through any systematic needs assessment or analysis of evidence.

Information gathering and sharing between partners is improving. Many schools are now actively working with partners to capture 'wider' achievement. Schools are increasingly interested in supporting a wide range of achievement opportunities. Identifying and sharing wider achievement and trends on non-participation is helping partners to identify need. However much of this remains at an early stage.

HM Inspectors found that a number of barriers to progressing joint planning and evaluation are evident. There is a lack of a shared vision and shared, agreed outcomes. There is a need to address a culture of professional silos across the board. As one contributor to the Creative Conversation event said "It is about making the links – making it work - Increase awareness of the contribution made to the whole not just the part" (Creative Conversation 26th November 2014)

HM Inspectors found that partners are continuing to plan individually rather than together. Planning and self-evaluation needs to be consistent and 'owned' by staff at all levels, strategic and operational. Arriving at a shared understanding and clear shared outcomes remains a challenge. A consistent theme was a request for more common evaluation and planning tools which work across sectors. Issues exist around partnerships matching resource to priority needs. There is a lack of understanding and clarity between partners about each partner's '*learning offer*'. As public resources reduce this is an increasing issue. CLD staff and the 3rd Sector in particular feel they are at risk of being pulled in too many directions and of achieving little through a lack of focus on clear priority needs.

There is a need for partners to be able to better access, input to and understand data. Data sources such as "*Insight*" are not yet fully understood or being used effectively by some partners. West Lothian Council for example have recently established a *Senior Phase* time-tablars group which take account of labour market and aspirations so curriculum can better meet needs. Whilst data such as labour market information is used in some partnerships it is not always used consistently. Whilst partnerships are making increasing use of data such as positive destinations figures, use of baseline information remains limited.

The absence of key partners is resulting in missed opportunities. HM Inspectors found that local businesses and employers are not consistently engaged in partnership work. Partners who are influential in lives of young people out-with school such as uniformed organisations and faith organisations are not fully engaged. Uniformed organisations are not clear on what their contribution to *Senior Phase* might be. Learners, parents and carers are not usually included in partnership structures.

4. What are the key challenges faced in progressing effective partnership working in the learning community?

Providing effective leadership

HM Inspectors found that there is a lack of clarity as to whose role is it to drive partnership forward. This is a particular concern as staffing levels in many CLD services reduce. The lack of formal partnership agreements in place has the potential to leave some partners vulnerable and inhibit consistency of practice.

Senior managers have a major role to play in maximising the contribution of partners and to help build a shared vision. There is a need for leadership at a senior management level to actively support partners / agencies to work together.

This would firmly embed CfE with its inclusive approach that includes all young people and particularly those most at risk into respective agency systems and thinking. This would improve joint planning of curriculum between school and partners. There is a need to shift the present paradigms so that in school and out of school cease to be the dividing line and instead focus on the total learning of a young person. This is especially the case with young people at risk of disengaging. Ensuring equality and parity across partners and giving staff 'permission' to innovate and be creative in order to do things better would lead to improved outcomes. The dominant culture that higher education is the gold standard as a positive destination for all young people needs to be challenged by all partners in light of initiatives such as Developing Scotland's Young Workforce and Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Improving shared workforce development opportunities

Undertaking Career Long Professional Development (CLPD) opportunities alongside staff from other sectors improves understanding of both the work and respective roles and complimentary contributions others can make. HM Inspectors found that not all partners have access to quality CLPD opportunities. As a result some partners are not completely clear about CfE and their contribution to it. There is a particular need to develop CLPD that focuses upon work with young people at risk of disengaging. There is scope to develop a more systematic and shared approach to workforce development which ensures access by all.

Developing mutual understanding of roles

HM Inspectors found that not all partners have a clear understanding of the role of others. Schools do not always understand CLD sector and vice versa. Schools need to better understand CLD's and the 3rd Sector's roles particularly with those most at risk. HM Inspectors found that there is considerable potential to develop tools to support 3rd sector and businesses to understand public service role and how they contribute to CfE and vice versa. The role of 3rd sector organisations and volunteers needs to be considered and planned carefully so they are fully involved but not overwhelmed.

Improving consistency/reliability

HM Inspectors found that the on-going fragmentation and reduction of CLD services is contributing to inconsistent support to partnership working. This is best illustrated where a CLD service worker leaves post or cannot attend meetings. As a result there is no one to cover meetings and/or project work in schools. This can leave schools feeling CLD services are unreliable which discourages continued partnership work. Inconsistency can also be created by short-term funded work which does not have resources to continue after the initial period regardless of outcomes. Adopting a more pro-active and clear, formalised partnership approach will help maintain continuity so the impact on young people is not reduced as services restructure and staff roles change. There is a need to develop such approaches, particularly for those working with young people at risk of disengaging. It is crucial to make clear the specific learning outcomes on offer at the start through focused partnership agreements.

Improving data and intelligence sharing

Improved support at a national level would further increase confidence and knowledge of systems such as *Insight* for data sharing and recording. This might include improving access by a wider range of partners. This would allow them to dig deeper in statistical evidence to improve early identification of young people at risk and those under attaining and non-positive trends. This should be a focus for schools' partnerships. Recent workshops delivered by Education Scotland staff around *Insight* and profiling are helping raise awareness of CLD managers. A series of development days with the Awards Network are also proving beneficial in improving how data is captured and shared. There is scope to further develop this area of work.

There is a particular role for Police, Health, CLD and Social Work around identification and engagement with those young people most at risk of disengaging. There is potential to develop similar approaches for those used in child protection. For example analysis of positive destination and attainment statistics on *Insight* to identify negative trends and inform work to improve them as partners. There is scope for more efficient use of data to support and improve joint planning. Partners should look at how existing management information systems could be better co-ordinated to improve data and intelligence sharing across agencies.

5. What difference is partnership working having in increasing and improving learning opportunities for young people?

HM Inspectors found that there are good examples of effective partnership working that improve learning and outcomes for young people. In a number of authorities CLD workers now operate specifically within secondary schools. This is increasing joint working which benefits young people. The following examples demonstrate how effective partnership working contributes to the senior phase:

In North Ayrshire, Community Development Service work in secondary schools is clearly laid out within a formal partnership agreement. These agreements set out a clear programme descriptor or purpose. The respective responsibilities of the school and of the youth service are clearly stated. Clear reference is made to the contribution programmes make to “*Curriculum for Excellence*” with specific reference to relevant statements of outcome. Agreements within schools are reviewed on a monthly basis. This encourages collegiate working and shared responsibility.

Targeted and effective partnership working between Fife CLD service, Waid Academy and Barnardo’s is resulting in support to vulnerable young people in *Waid Girls group*. As a result the girls have increased self-esteem, confidence to work with others, are better engaged in learning and are making healthier and safer life choices. The girls have improved relationships with peers, school staff and family members. They are effectively supported by workers to explore the progression routes they will take, both in their final years of school and post-school. All young people in the *Waid Academy Senior Schools Transition Group (S5)* are more confident as a result of participating. Members of the group are taking an active leadership role in helping fundraise to support the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival. Nearly all young people on the ‘*Icebreakers*’ provision, which ran in previous years and which the *Senior School Transition Group* is based on, secured positive school leaver destinations.

Young people participating in the Stirling High School Employability ‘*Get into Construction*’ programme are achieving and progressing. They are aware of their learning journey, recognise their achievements and understand the progression routes they need take to achieve their goals. Almost all are highly motivated and focused on achieving their goals. Four out of nine learners participating in the previous course have secured employment. Partners (including CLD service) involved in delivering the programme have effectively linked in with local private construction companies to secure sustainable placements and employment opportunities for learners. Partners meet regularly to jointly plan and evaluate the programme.

In Aberdeenshire, a pathfinder Local Learning Partnership has been established as part of an approach to strengthening learning through partnership working. CLD staff are facilitating this development and Fraserburgh Academy has been an active partner in taking this forward. Following an initial self-evaluation and harnessing the learning from an Education Scotland inspection a focus was set on the *Senior Phase* aspect of learning for young people. A year on, further self-evaluation work and a scheduled secondary school quality improvement visit have identified some key improvements in the learning community. The culmination of the appointment of a new head teacher and the inspection at Fraserburgh Academy has led to a refocusing of school priorities. The main effect has been the change in ethos in all aspects of school life. This has been mainly brought about by delegation and empowerment of senior and middle managers. All staff have bought into the vision and direction of school life. All stakeholders, including learning partners are on board with, and involved in, shaping the way forward. Partnership has been strengthened. A more coherent approach to assessing needs,

identifying strategies for delivery and self-evaluation is in place. The benefits are already being felt for partner players but importantly in increased opportunity for learners. The message is one of an improvement journey with significant building blocks now in place, an ethos established and results emerging – all increasing the capacity to improve.

Stewarton Academy staff and partners work well together with regard to the *senior phase*. Young people in S4, 5 & 6 year groups engage well in work experience. Ninety-six percent of S4 have successfully engaged in work experience. Thirteen young people in S5/6 are positively engaged in a 60-hour vocational package based on their own interests. As part of a flexible S4 curriculum, Early Education and Childcare and Higher Psychology courses are delivered in school by Ayrshire College. A number of S5 and S6 young people attend Ayrshire College/ Kilmarnock Campus. Local employers such as Sainsbury's and Hyspec (engineering) work well with the school to prepare young people for the world of employment. Skills gained through Sainsbury's employment programme assisting young people to positively progress with employment, college and university applications.

The contribution of national youth work organisations is increasingly being recognised and used by schools and other public services in terms of *senior phase* and post school. Schools are making increasing use of national awards such as *John Muir Trust*. In Aberdeen City the *Duke of Edinburgh's Award* recently provided input to activity agreement organisers as to how it can be used within their work with individual young people.

6. How effective is support for young people who have either disengaged or are risk of disengaging from education? What difference is this having on the lives of young people?

Recommendation 13 of the Wood Commission's report clearly states, "*Support for young people at risk of disengaging from education and for those who have already done so should focus on early intervention and wide ranging, sustained support*" (Education Working For All! Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce Final Report June 2014)

HM Inspectors found that local authorities are increasingly adopting pro- active and effective approaches to support those young people who have either disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education. In a number of authorities there is clear agenda for action which is shared across a range of partners. As a result partners have a clear understanding of their respective roles and contributions. Initiatives such as Activity Agreements are proving to be increasingly effective in supporting individual young people to progress. HM Inspectors identified the positive and trusting relationship developed between the young person and dedicated support as a key success factor. Across Scotland, increasingly, there are good examples of targeted work which impact positively on young people.

Effective partnership working can make a significant contribution to reducing exclusions. In the last two years, there have been no exclusions at Waid Academy, Fife. This can be attributed to the very positive and pro-active approach the school, working with partners has taken in identifying and responding to individual young people's needs. The "Edinburgh Agreement" offer from Edinburgh City Council makes a clear commitment to support all young people to progress to positive destinations. In addition to acting as a possible employer, the authority has also secured very good buy in from significant local private sector employers. Edinburgh CLD and voluntary sector partners also take into account issues such as accessible transport when identifying employment opportunities for young people from areas of deprivation. Pre-activity agreement programmes are effectively delivered in school by a local third sector organisation.

HM inspectors identified that targeting intervention needs to begin well before the start of the senior phase. There is scope to initiate discussions in primary school or at the transition from primary to secondary. Some authorities are engaged in pre-activity agreement with young people identified as most at risk. This earlier engagement is having a positive impact. The level of knowledge of the local labour market is variable. Whilst partners have a good knowledge of the local employment market, there is a potential disconnect with broader employment opportunities, new and emerging labour markets and the skills they require. The needs of employers are not always fully understood. There is scope to better engage with employers around identifying and responding to their needs. There are gaps in the curriculum, relating to the work of work, which need to be addressed. Incompatible data management systems prevent partners from accessing and sharing valuable information. Providing effective support to those at risk of or who have disengaged from education can at times be of a complex nature. As a result, it requires in-depth partnership working to address. However, in the current economic climate this presents a challenge to partners. There is a variation in the support on offer from mainstream and special schools and in the support to young people with Additional Support Needs.

7. Recommendations

These recommendations are not aimed specifically at any particular local authority or agency. They are designed to be used by all local authorities with local and national CLD partners drawing on the strengths and issues identified, to improve further the opportunities and outcomes for young people within the *Senior Phase*.

We recommend that, working together local authorities, schools and other CLD partners should:

- offer *effective leadership* to support partners / agencies to work together locally to develop a *shared vision, outcome focused planning* and *mutual understanding of roles*;
- improve, promote and deliver relevant *shared workforce development opportunities* to an increased range of partners;
- increase the range of cross- sectoral outcome based learning opportunities which can be offered within the *Senior Phase* through *encouraging more creative thinking* and by *breaking down more traditional sectoral approaches*;
- improve data sharing opportunities across partners;
- improve knowledge of wider and emerging employment opportunities;
- work with local employers to build up a picture of their employment requirements;
- actively implement recommendation 13 of the Wood Report;
- ensure parity of opportunity for children from both mainstream and special schools;
- engage with young people at an earlier age around the world of work;

Education Scotland should:

- ensure CLD regulation / strategic guidance plans feature within any local discussions around CfE and the delivery of the *Senior Phase*;
- provide national leadership on *promoting and developing joint CLPD*;
- develop *simple but effective common planning and evaluation tools* which work across sectors;
- use events such as the Scottish Learning Festival to *develop / promote further joint approaches* across partnerships through workshops and *sharing of good practice*;

- working in partnership with Scottish Government, local authorities and national, uniformed and 3rd Sector organisations take forward identified areas for improvement within this report and;
- identify, promote and disseminate, effective, and innovative partnership work to a wider audience.

Scottish Government should:

- improve access to data at a national level for CLD partners to help build confidence and knowledge of systems to facilitate more effective data sharing and recording.

National voluntary and uniformed youth organisations and Awards Network should:

- more effectively capture and actively promote the contribution their organisation makes to the *Senior Phase* and encourage participation at a local level and;
- develop resources which better capture young people's achievements and that complement existing Insight and pupil profiling tools.

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