

Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

Fife Council

13 February 2024

1. Context

HM Inspectors visited Fife Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during December 2023. During the visit, we talked to learners and community representatives, CLD leaders, managers, staff, volunteers, and other key stakeholders. HM Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the local authority CLD partnerships' approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and considered progress made against identified priorities in their CLD plans.

2. Findings from the progress visit

How effective is the leadership of the local authority and their CLD partners in improving outcomes?

Areas of positive progress

The leadership of CLD is effective and there is a clear vision for improvement. CLD is well embedded in strategic partnerships and is increasingly valued across council services and wider stakeholders. The Fife Partnership Board oversees the governance and delivery of the Plan for Fife and associated partnership plans such as the CLD Plan. The CLD Plan has a strong focus on addressing inequalities and tackling poverty and links well with the ambitions of the Plan for Fife. Regular reporting on the progress of the CLD Plan is helping to highlight the positive impact of CLD approaches across the council and community planning partnership.

Decentralised structures such as the People and Place leadership group are enabling more effective multi-disciplinary working with partners. Relationships across partnerships are based upon mutual respect and trust. Partners target their resources well to support local priorities, which is helping to reduce duplication. Staff and community members at all levels are well supported by senior leaders and committed to improving outcomes for learners and communities. They have autonomy to co-deliver projects and respond appropriately to meet changing needs. This is helping to address social isolation, financial hardship and mental health and wellbeing for those most in need.

At a strategic level, partners have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve. This is informed by individual project level self-evaluation and external research. A multi-disciplinary approach is helping to ensure that there is 'no wrong door' for learners and community members. As a result, partnership working is increasing the CLD Partnership's capacity for continuous improvement. The Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis Board provides strong and effective leadership to plan for improvement to benefit those most in need. Poverty Action Groups continue to use evidence and data well to identify and respond to those most in need to prevent crisis, including use of the Low-Income Family Tracker. There are a few positive examples of peer and facilitated self-evaluation with partners in the southwest locality. This is supporting a more consistent approach to joint monitoring of local plans. Practitioners and partners now have a better understanding of the impact of their work and their areas for development. Participatory budgeting approaches across the council are strong, including the allocation of small grants. As a result, Fife Council are exceeding the 1% target set by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Council staff, partners and volunteers are supported well with a comprehensive professional learning programme. Council staff take an active role in regional and national networks, which enhances the workforce development offer. Practitioners value highly the professional learning pathways and a few staff are progressing to undergraduate and post graduate study. As a result, practitioners and leaders have increased capacity to respond and adapt to changing needs.

Areas for development

The CLD plan is not yet fully measurable. This is inhibiting the CLD Partnership's ability to report on the collective impact and progress towards meeting the requirements of the CLD Regulations. There is a need for CLD partners to work together to set clear outcomes and measures of success. A more consistent approach to joint self-evaluation across partnerships would help to increase partners' capacity for continuous improvement.

How well does the performance of the local authority and their CLD partners demonstrate positive impact?

Areas of positive progress

CLD leaders are updating their corporate performance management approaches. This will help them to identify baselines for 2023-24 and inform a more consistent approach to gathering performance information. At a local level, the impact of CLD is recorded and reported. Data shows that in the previous two years, the majority of national CLD key performance indicators show an increasing trend. This highlights that participation and engagement with CLD services is now in line with pre-pandemic levels. Poverty Action Groups make very effective use of local community profiles, local intelligence and other data. This is helping them to inform and respond to new and emerging needs and prevent crisis. At a project level, staff are using case studies well to demonstrate impact on learners and community members. Most third sector organisations have robust and clear performance monitoring through, for example, service level agreements with the council. This informs reporting on progress to the council and existing funders and is helping to secure new funding.

CLD Partners know their communities well. They have an improved and shared understanding across professional disciplines of who is best placed to meet individual and community needs. This is helping to address barriers to accessing provision and improving timely access to resources and services for those most in need. This includes summer programmes and joint work between CLD and Police Scotland to establish detached youth work. As a result, approaches to tackling anti-social behaviour is reducing the numbers of young people entering the youth justice system. Wellbeing ambassadors, in a few secondary schools, are providing social and emotional support to those young people who need it. There are a few strong examples of community led initiatives making a difference for local communities. Skilled, active and committed volunteers are supported well to improve community facilities, such as Kennoway Pump Track. This is improving the health and wellbeing of residents and increasing their social skills and networks of support. Partners including Restoration Fife, KY8 Adapt and other relevant services have increased the range of drug and alcohol prevention and services to the area. They are providing individual and recovery support for those who would benefit most. This is helping to reduce stigma associated with problem drug use and decrease drug related deaths in the area.

There is an increasing demand for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision. A few ESOL learners are improving their speaking and writing in English, which is helping them to

integrate into local life. Adult learners value learning and participation in personal development programmes. They are developing their literacy, numeracy, and leadership skills. Learners are now using tools and strategies to improve their lives, family relationships and respond positively in crisis situations. A few learners are progressing to volunteering or employment and value the support which they describe as 'life changing'. Young people are supported well to have their voices heard. The Employability Access Support for Young People removes barriers to participation and supports young people aged 16-19 years to progress. Young people are, gaining qualifications and skills for learning, life and work. As a result, high numbers are achieving a sustained positive destination and are progressing to college or employment.

Areas for development

The CLD Partnership do not yet understand fully their collective impact on learners and communities. CLD leaders should set clear and measurable targets within the CLD plan and associated plans. This includes improving approaches to quality assurance of adult learning provision which will help to improve the learner experience.

3. Main points for action

The CLD partnership should collectively develop outcomes which outline clear measures of success. This will help support the systematic monitoring and recording of impact, identify trends over time, and inform continuous improvement.

4. Practice worth sharing more widely

During the inspection, we identified an aspect of highly effective practice which we would like to explore further.

The Fife Alcohol and Drugs Strategy 2020-2023 highlights the need for a locality-based approach to ensure equity of support for those at risk of drug related death and harm. In response, the Levenmouth project worked with key partners to introduce services within the Sandy Brae Community Education Centre. Partners have increased the presence of drugs and alcohol prevention and pathways provision to the area. For example, Restoration Fife, KY8 Adapt and other relevant services are providing individual and recovery support for those who would benefit most. A drop in café, access to medication assisted treatment and other relevant services is helping reduce stigma associated with problem drug use, which can prevent users and their family from accessing services. As a result, between 2019-2023 there is a decrease in drug related deaths in the area.

5. What happens next?

We recognise that the local authority and their CLD partners are making progress with their CLD plan, however, some improvement is required. We will ask for a report on progress on the agreed areas for improvement within one year of the report publication. Taking account of the progress report, we will then decide what further engagement with the local authority and their CLD partners is required.

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HM Inspector
13 February 2024