

Inspection of Community Learning and Development in Scottish Borders Council

13 November 2017

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1. Context

Community learning and development (CLD) partners within Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and the area of Galashiels were inspected by Education Scotland during August and September 2017. During the visit Education Scotland staff talked to children, young people, adults and community organisations. We worked closely with local CLD managers, CLD providers, partners, paid staff and volunteers. We wanted to find out the quality of the strategic leadership of CLD and the quality of CLD provision in the area. We also looked at how well paid staff and volunteers are developing their own practices and building capacity. We looked at how partners are contributing to current and evolving national policy objectives such as closing the poverty-related attainment gap; prevention; reducing social isolation; tackling health inequalities; and empowering communities.

2. How good is the strategic leadership of community learning and development?

Leadership and direction of CLD across SBC is strong. Visions, values and aims are clear and well understood by SBC staff and partners. There is a strong focus on tackling inequality and CLD plays a key role. The Strategic Assessment produced in 2016 is driving improvement. CLD is well-embedded in SBC's three strategic priorities of Economy and Low Carbon, Reducing Inequalities and Future Service Reform. Governance structures are clear and owned by partners. Reporting arrangements are straightforward and there are well-developed lines of accountability into the Community Planning Partnership. The structure of the nine CLD Learning Community Partnerships is working well. Reporting into the CLD Strategic Partnership is well-understood and is viewed by partners as effective. The CLD Strategic Plan (2015-18) is well written and clearly focused on outcomes. Good progress has been made in aligning these to the five priorities of the Inequalities Theme group. CLD and their partners are using data supported by local knowledge to respond to need, for example, the production of the 'six ways to be well' booklet. SBC is the first local authority in Scotland to work towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) charter status. The recent inspection of Children's Services in SBC endorsed the strong partnership work between CLD and the third sector.

Self-evaluation is well embedded. CLD Learning Community Partnerships regularly conduct self-evaluations to gauge progress against priorities. This includes contributions from Youth Borders, Borders College and Volunteer Centre Borders. A programme of peer review is beginning to drive improvement. Galashiels CLD Partnership demonstrate good governance in terms of clarity of role and partner engagement. They are starting to reduce duplication and make better use of shared data although there is more to do. SBC and their partners now need to take account of the impact of the move to Locality Groups. Care should be taken to ensure that the impact of current effective practice is not diminished.

CLD staff are well supported by managers to reflect on their practice and develop new skills. They are given responsibility for leading areas of work and there are opportunities to build on their leadership skills, for example, CLD workers leading the CLD Learning Community Partnerships. Almost all CLD staff are members of the CLD Standards Council and most make use of I Develop. A good range of mandatory training is available to staff including child protection and data protection. Outcome focused planning for partners is developing shared understanding. Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) training is being shared across other

local authorities using a ‘train the trainers’ approach and this is helping to increase capacity. Young people volunteering through Active Schools are accessing good training and development and participants in Voice of my Own (VOMO) are securing jobs as a result of the training and development on offer. Partnership working is highlighting the benefits of volunteering for community groups and organisations. Volunteer managers are benefiting from training and support from The Bridge and Volunteer Centre Borders. SBC should consider digital alternatives to help address travel issues and access to training.

3. How good is the learning and development in this community?

CLD and their partners are using data from the Strategic Assessment to target their work to priority groups. The Galashiels CLD Partnership also use this to direct their work. However, focusing on priorities for a longer period of time would help to demonstrate progression. Similarly, performance data could be better used to identify and target under-represented groups. The 27-30 month health check information used by health visitors is helping to target appropriate families in need of support. As a result parents are now engaging in learning programmes including PEEP and Incredible Years. A few parents are now reporting improvements in their child’s behaviour. There is an improving trend in the majority of work in Galashiels. There are increasing numbers of learners participating in employability programmes and more people are gaining qualifications. Increasing numbers of volunteers are working at TD1, although overall volunteer numbers in Galashiels have fallen slightly over the past year. There is an increasing trend in participation in adult learning activity and more adults are gaining accreditation. The Diabetes Health and Physical Activity programme demonstrates improvements in health for participants. Most members are now more active and some have reduced their intake of medication. TD1 effectively target young people in need of support. Good numbers regularly attend their drop-in sessions. Most progress on to other activities, for example, the music project. Active Schools are robust in their tracking of young people. Although there is a downward trend in participation, these remain above the national average. School Improvement Plans would benefit from inclusion of CLD’s contributions to local priorities.

Most community groups are confident, skilled and active. Many promote social diversity and address barriers to participation effectively. The Tweedbank Early Learners Committee are growing in confidence and improving provision for children and their families. The Stow Lunch Club provides a valuable service to help tackle social isolation. Their production of the Gala Water Directory is circulated widely. The Galashiels and Selkirk Local Citizens Panel respond to consultations and produce easy to read documents. Langlee Residents Association has a strong legacy of taking action on local issues. They effectively act as a contact point for local people to raise community issues. Energise Galashiels Trust have up to 50 active volunteers working to improve the town centre. Supported by Borders Volunteer Centre, NHS Borders Health Improvement and SBC, the Langlee Sheddars are developing skills and securing resources. They effectively network with other community groups, share resources and maximise income generation. The quality of life of participants is improving through their participation in the Men’s Shed. Strong partnership working between Borders Homeless Team and Housing Associations is resulting in a new protocol for care leavers. This is helping to improve outcomes for this group, making it easier to track their progress. Youth Borders provide good capacity building support to membership organisations. Voluntary Action Funding is increasing the capacity of member organisations to support the recruitment and retention of volunteers. VOMO and Borders Youth Voice are significantly increasing the capacity of young

people to raise issues of local and national importance through film and radio. However, across SBC partners would benefit from developing the overall offer to volunteers and to quantify impact more systematically. The Langlee Gentle Exercise group benefit from targeted support from The Bridge. Leadership capacity within the group is increasing and committee members promote other initiatives such as the Langlee carnival. A more tailored approach to matching volunteers at Volunteer Centre Borders is resulting in increased uptake. Although some organisations are accessing good quality capacity building support, it is not always clear who provides this and where it can be accessed. This could be strengthened by establishing a 'capacity building offer'.

Across SBC learners are supported well to progress their learning. Programmes are mostly relevant and based on need. Wild About Wellbeing supports young women from Galashiels Academy to improve their health and wellbeing. There are improvements in resilience and social skills as a result. Young people are regularly involved in the design of their learning, for example, in the music and Thinking Differently projects at TD1. LGBT young people benefit from advice and support through a weekly drop-in and they actively engage in the design and delivery of the programme. The Fire Skills programme developed in partnership with the Scottish Fire Service delivers a range of learning experiences leading to young people gaining skills and accreditation. Fire fighters receive youth work training and the programme gained a Youth Work of the Year partnership award. Borders Youth Voice engages young people in charring meetings, organising events and participating in public speaking. They are actively involved in evaluating the quality of the provision. Tomorrow's People support young people to gain a positive destination on leaving school. Personalised support programmes are in place to track progression. Similarly, young people at Galashiels Academy are gaining meaningful work experience through good partnership working between employers, teachers and other partners. There are signs that targeted approaches through the Connect Zone is starting to have an impact.

The use of scientific improvement methodology in early learning and childcare is increasing the use of book bags and encouraging early literacy. However, clearer plans for transition and progression now need to be established. The learning offer for Looked After and Accommodated young people is meeting needs and supporting life skills. Young care leavers are actively involved in planning their learning pathways. In a few groups, Active Schools volunteers would benefit from further support to identify next steps in their learning. Similarly, VOMO could explore a variety of innovative funding mechanisms to increase capacity and sustainability. Most learners have Individual Learning Plans although these could be improved by establishing a standardised approach. Syrian refugees are well-supported to develop language skills and progress their learning. Awareness raising about trauma would help staff working with Syrian families to better tailor the learning. Adults accessing the Literacies and Employability group regularly record and review their learning. Achievements are captured through in-house certificates and award ceremonies across a range of learning programmes.

What is the capacity of the local authority and CLD partners to further improve?

This inspection of CLD in SBC found the following key strengths.

- Strong strategic leadership that is setting direction for CLD across Scottish Borders.
- Life changing impacts for participants across a range of programmes.
- Effective support to volunteering.
- Strong focus on equality and diversity.

We discussed with partners how they might continue to improve their work. This is what we agreed with them.

- Strengthen target setting, report on progress and analyse trends over time across the partnership.
- Develop the capacity building offer for groups and communities.

4. What happens at the end of the inspection?

The inspection team was able to rely on the high quality self-evaluation provided by the local authority. Partners have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement and communities are achieving very well. As a result we have ended the inspection process at this stage.

Sheila Brown
HM Inspector
13 November 2017

Quality indicators help CLD providers, partners and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved. You can find these quality indicators in the publication *How good is the learning and development in our community?*

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/frwk4hgiocommunitylearning.aspx>

Education Scotland evaluates four important quality indicators to help monitor the quality of CLD across Scotland. Here are the results for this inspection.

Improvements in performance	good
Impact on the local community	good
Delivering the learning offer with learners	good
Leadership and direction	very good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgments made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

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