

Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

Moray Council

5 December 2023

1. Context

HM Inspectors visited Moray Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during October 2023. During the visit, we talked to learners and community representatives, CLD leaders, managers, staff, and volunteers, and other key stakeholders. HM Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of 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

Leadership of CLD is effective. It is supported by regular self-evaluation and routine monitoring of progress. The CLD Strategic Partnership has expanded its membership and this is supporting a more cohesive approach to CLD planning. The CLD Partnership Plan aligns well with local and national priorities. CLD arrangements link well with community planning structures and this helps to ensure that the CLD Partners contribute to strategic priorities. Leaders value CLD and demonstrate a clear understanding of its role, particularly with regard to community development and in improving outcomes for learners and communities. As a result, there are an increasing number of partners now using CLD methodologies to improve outcomes for learners and communities. Strategic CLD partners across Moray share a common purpose with a focus on social justice, tackling inequality and improving synergy across strategic lead partnerships. They work well together to target resources and support communities to reduce inequity and the impact of poverty.

CLD leaders and staff make effective use of reporting and planning structures and engage in regular self-evaluation to support improvement. This is increasing partners' understanding of CLD and improving links across strategic groups. Relationships across the partnership are also based upon mutual respect and trust. Staff and volunteers are benefiting from engagement in professional learning. This is increasing their skills and capacity to respond and adapt to change, including to mental health and wellbeing challenges and mitigating the impact of poverty. Local community organisations and community members are actively planning and delivering aspects of local services. As a result, community hubs and key community organisations are recognised as catalysts for change. The strong partnerships facilitated by the third sector interface, tsiMoray, is leading to increased significant investment in local communities. Partners, including the CLD Service have extended Participatory Budgeting arrangements such as Just Transition funding scheme. This investment is helping to improve local infrastructure and reduce the carbon footprint of local community organisations. Effective partnership working facilitated by safeguarding leads have significantly increased awareness of online safety in a joint campaign with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Scotland.

Areas for development

There is a need for greater clarity about how strategic groups link together to better demonstrate their collective impact. The CLD Strategic Partnership and CLD Partnership Plan needs to better reflect the work of all partners providing CLD across Moray. Some key partners, including

youth work organisations, are not yet fully represented or involved. The CLD Strategic Partnership should continue to strengthen groups such as the Adult Learners Forum and Youth Work Network to inform the work of the CLD Partnership Plan. The CLD Strategic Partnership would benefit from developing structures to enable learners of all ages to be involved and influence CLD planning as equal partners. There is also a need for partners to continue to strengthen their shared approach to self-evaluation.

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

Areas of positive progress

CLD staff and increasingly strategic partners, contribute performance data and qualitative information to support the reporting of progress to the council and Community Planning Partnership Board. The national key performance indicators developed by Community Learning and Development Managers Scotland are used well by the CLD Strategic Partnership to identify key changes. Data gathered over the last three years shows that engagement in CLD activity is on an upward trend, with provision recovering from the pandemic. CLD service staff make effective use of reporting tools to show the impact that their work is having on learning and communities. Most council CLD staff have a clear understanding of the need for performance monitoring and routinely record their progress in meeting key aims. Many CLD third sector organisations have robust and clear performance monitoring approaches in place. This supports them to both provide feedback to existing funders and successfully gain new funding.

CLD partners, including volunteer-run community organisations, deliver a wide range of targeted services. Partners are clear about their contribution and know who is best placed to meet local need. This helps target resources to areas of greatest need, reduce barriers to participation, and support those with additional challenges. The Buckie Hub is supporting members of the community well to feel included and safe. This is supporting users to address issues in their lives, including those facing homelessness and experiencing addiction issues. Older people from well-established Be Active Live Long groups across Moray are well supported through weekly activities. This helps to improve their health and wellbeing, increase friendship circles and social connectedness. Men's Sheds are also active in contributing to projects for community benefit. Targeted transition support, provided by CLD and school staff in Buckie High School, is helping pupils in S1 settle into their new environment and reducing barriers. This is improving attendance and having a positive impact on attainment and achievement.

CLD Partners are working effectively to support volunteers, learners and community activists to gain new skills to meet their needs. Adult learners are developing a wide range of skills through participation in CLD service adult and family learning programmes. They value the support they receive from the CLD service which is helping them to overcome earlier negative learning experiences. Local employability partners are providing targeted and person-centred support to learners. This helps them access appropriate learning pathways and develop skills to meet their aspirations and progress towards their next step. Young people enjoy participating in a wide range of activities where they gain skills in leadership, communication and decision making. They are now more confident in other areas of their life, including managing their time for study, school and volunteering. Attendees at the local Gaelic group are progressing in their use of conversational Gaelic. They are also developing an understanding of the origins of Gaelic words. Dallas Primary School are using Gaelic within the curriculum and have developed two films which have integrated history, Gaelic and art. This is increasing children's understanding of local history and use of Gaelic language skills.

Areas for development

The overall picture of CLD performance is not yet fully captured by CLD partners. There are key partners who are not yet part of the CLD Strategic Partnership. CLD partners need now to consider how they can best work together to demonstrate their collective impact and progress over time. This would inform CLD planning to avoid significant gaps in provision or duplication and ensure every learner or potential learner, and each community, is best served. Community organisations will require ongoing capacity building support to continue to support those facing challenges in their lives and meet community needs. Senior leaders now need to consider how best support can be resourced and sustained to enable them to meet their ambitions regarding increasing partnership work with communities.

3. Main points for action

The CLD strategic partnership needs to identify how they can best expand the partners involved in CLD plans. This should explore how the independent youth organisations, community activists and organisations, and learners can best contribute to planning and decision-making processes.

4. Practice worth sharing more widely

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

Partners involved in a joint campaign with NSPCC Scotland 'Moray - lets chat online safety' have used creative approaches to increase awareness of online safety. They have successfully engaged a significant number of local parents, carers and children and young people to develop skills and resources to stay safe online. This involves practical tips and advice and workshops. Parent and carers have the opportunity to attend monthly workshops and monthly lunchtime learning sessions are provided for professionals. Based on feedback from the campaign activity a series of frequently asked questions resources have been created and made available online with advice and guidance regarding internet safety.

Over the summer period the campaign team attended community events such as agricultural shows and RAF events with information stand and lingo bingo competition to engage with children, young people and parents.

5. What happens next?

We recognise that the local authority and their CLD partners are making progress in the majority of areas of their CLD plan, however some improvement is required. We will ask for a report on progress on the areas for improvement within agreed timescales. 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
5 December 2023