

# Inspection of Community Learning and Development in Dumfries and Galloway Council

**29 January 2018**

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# 1. Context

Community learning and development (CLD) partners within Dumfries and Galloway Council and the area of Dumfries were inspected by Education Scotland during November and December 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?

Strategic leadership of CLD across Dumfries and Galloway is strong. In response to reducing resources, smarter working and better strategic vision for CLD is now in place. There is a strong sense of collective ownership. Re-alignment of council services into four directorates supports the change agenda for CLD. The recent move to a Ward Officer structure is helping to deliver the council's aspirations in terms of the Community Empowerment Act. However, there is scope to improve the clarity of roles between thematic, area and ward partnership groups. The Chief Executive of the council and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) leaders demonstrate a commitment to addressing poverty and disadvantage. Leaders at all levels also demonstrate an active commitment to making positive change. Partnership work to address poverty is well developed and ambitious. The 2015-2020 anti-poverty strategy sets out clear visions, objectives and actions. Local people in the *Tackling Poverty Reference Group* report directly to the CPP. Their opinions are valued and have a direct influence on the development of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. This effective practice merits sharing elsewhere.

Very good use of service reviews and needs assessment is driving change. For example, the strategy for work with young people is informed by the review of Services for Young People leading to reductions in duplication and better targeting of resources. Support for high profile events by elected members and senior officers such as *YouthBeatz* demonstrate a commitment to improving life chances. Self-evaluation is robust and partners plan effectively together. Commissioning arrangements with organisations delivering services for young people have robust systems in place to monitor progress. The *Dumfries Learning Town Initiative* sets out an ambitious plan for improving educational outcomes including the development of 'The Bridge' multi-learning site in Dumfries. Whilst CLD work with schools is progressing there is more to do to ensure that all partners understand their respective roles. It would also be beneficial for partners to reflect on how well community planning arrangements support community organisations to contribute to decision making at all levels.

CLD partners ensure staff and volunteers are appropriately supported to carry out their roles. There are plans to ensure that all youth workers complete a Personal Development Award in Youth Work during the next two years. Partners make good use of external agencies to extend the training offer to staff, for example, in community engagement. The council is

outward looking in relation to the professional development of staff. A personal development assessment tool allows staff to understand their style and make improvements. Youth workers benefit from participating in national and international event where they share practice and ideas with colleagues. A training calendar that reflects workforce development across sectors would further enhance this. Young volunteers are well supported to gain accreditation such as first aid. Long term prisoners at HMP Dumfries complete a programme of mentor training enabling them to support other prisoners with their literacy. Impressively, a regular feature of youth worker training involves young people in delivering inputs and workshops.

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

Partners use data, research and needs assessments well to plan learning programmes. There is a strong focus on improving life chances and addressing poverty. The *Poverty and Deprivation in Dumfries and Galloway* report underpins anti-poverty work. CLD targets are referenced in the Council Plan for 2017-22 and focus on targeting vulnerable children and young people. This includes young people with mental health issues, learning disabilities and low self-esteem. People achieving nationally recognised awards shows an improving trend over the last four years. Completions of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award are improving and Active Schools are successfully involving more young people in sport. Across Dumfries there are significant improvements in young people achieving personal developments goals and volunteering is strong with increasing numbers gaining Saltire Awards. Improving the tracking of young people's achievements in and out of school would further enhance this. The *Usual Place* pinpoints a range of change indicators to measure the success of their work with young people with learning disabilities. As a result, almost all young people are achieving a positive outcome. There are some fluctuations in participation in adult learning and in the way which data is collated. Partners now need to better capture the overall picture of adult learning and volunteering. Positive destinations for young people are improving. Partners work well together, for example, through Employability Coordination Groups. The *Building Healthy Communities* programme effectively targets those facing multiple deprivation. The Stove Network successfully engage local people in public events with good increases in participation. Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway met or exceeded their targets for volunteer engagement in the last year.

Across Dumfries, almost all community groups and organisations are active and skilled. They are instrumental in driving change. *The Stove Network* run a well-used café, workshop and gallery space providing employment for over 20 people. They are instrumental in developing another organisation, the *Midsteeples Quarter Initiative* that has innovative plans for re-generating the town centre. Both organisations work well with partners and are engaging with high numbers of local people. Committed, enthusiastic volunteers contribute effectively to community development in Dumfries. They contribute very well to a wide range of initiatives such as the *Dumfries and Galloway Hard of Hearing Group*, *the Solway Credit Union*, *The Super Mondays* and *The Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust*. The *Learners Together* community group finances a selection of adult learning classes in North West Dumfries. Participants are now more involved in their communities as a result. *The Tackling Poverty Reference Group* plays a key role in community planning at a local level. Volunteers are influencing strategy documents related to fuel poverty and the living wage. *The Year of Young People* group is influenced and run by young people themselves. They are creative and inclusive and have plans to ensure that

all young people are able to participate in the many events planned for 2018. *The Hub* has 140 volunteers directly delivering community development. Their digital inclusion programme is increasing learners' capacity to use new technology. Groups such as *Summerhill Community Centre*, *Lochside Is Families Together* and *Hidden Histories* are providing new and creative opportunities for learning. Almost all groups plan and evaluate well, effectively involving local people through consultation. However, the council could do more to enhance community voice and empowerment. Whilst good informal networks exist, it is not always clear where third sector organisations go to for support and advice.

The learning offer across Dumfries is well-planned and linked to identified need. Programmes to support young people are relevant, taking the needs of individuals into account. Those attending the *Youth Enquiry Service* benefit from high quality programmes addressing mental health and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender issues. Many young people highly value the support they receive that helps them to progress to other learning and volunteering. Across youth work provision relationships with staff and volunteers are positive. Programmes such as the Princes Trust in collaboration with Dumfries and Galloway College, *Super Mondays* and groups at OASIS Youth Centre are bespoke and designed with young people. Young people with learning disabilities benefit from a well-designed bespoke programme of learning at *The Usual Place*. Using the café as a medium, they are gaining important life skills. The peer education model at OASIS is assisting young people to gain accreditation and achieve individual goals. High profile events such as *YouthBeatz* and *The Toon* attract large numbers of young people each year. Self-evaluation is well embedded in youth work provision organised by CLD. Young people also participate where appropriate. This is leading to improvement.

Adults with additional support needs access a range of learning through the *Buddies* programme, some of it certificated. As a result they are developing independence and autonomy. Parents in Family Learning programmes such as PEEP and *Roots to Empathy* report changes to their confidence and ability to socialise with others. Prior learning is taken into account in almost all programmes. Most adult learners have individual learning plans and are aware of their next steps. English for speakers of other languages learners progress well and understand the benefits of developing language skills. *Let's Get Sporty* uses sport to embed healthier lifestyles. Volunteers are gaining experience and qualifications allowing them to identify next steps in their learning. Whilst most adults are progressing well, there is scope for learning pathways to be clearer. It would also be beneficial for celebrations of achievements to have a higher profile.

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

This inspection of CLD in Dumfries and Galloway Council found the following key strengths.

- Strong leadership that is driving change.
- Well targeted approaches for those facing additional challenges.
- Ambitious community organisations taking forward innovative projects.
- Participants and volunteers contributing to learning.

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

- Improving the voice of community organisations.
- Develop a shared understanding of provision and progress.

## 4. What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the local authority's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified aspects of interesting practice which we would like to explore further. As a result we will work with the local community and education authority in order to record and share more widely the interesting practice.

Sheila Brown  
**HM Inspector**  
29 January 2018

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.

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

**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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