

Report of community learning and development in Aberdeenshire Council

HM Inspectors carried out a progress visit to Aberdeenshire Council in December 2023. HM Inspectors identified that the local authority and their partners were making progress in the majority of areas in their community learning and development (CLD) plan. However, some improvement was required. HM Inspectors requested a report on progress on the main point for action. Aberdeenshire Council and the Aberdeenshire Learning Community Partnership (ALCP) submitted a report on progress in January 2025. HM Inspectors met with them in February 2025 to discuss its contents.

Main point for action: The ALCP needs to take responsibility for improving the governance of CLD. This will help to create a greater sense of collective ownership and ensure that CLD is driven by a strengthened partnership approach.

The ALCP has taken appropriate steps to expand their membership. More partners are now involved and contributing. Having the right partners round the table is leading to improving attendance at meetings and greater ownership of shared priorities. As a result of this approach, the link between schools and the ALCP is strengthened. The ALCP produced recently a Terms of Reference (TOR) document that outlines clearly the roles and expectations of its members. The TOR is informing the work of the ALCP and partners are clear about how it guides its work.

The ALCP have benefited from two development days, which has helped strengthen reporting on progress. All partners found these events helpful in the development of the new CLD plan priority themes. Partners now have a greater sense of ownership of the CLD plan. Over 30 partners contributed to the development days, which helped establish better connections with the CLD plan. Partners are now clearer that the CLD Plan is a partnership plan and not only for the council. Each of the six Local Learning Community Partnerships (LLCPs) have an action plan that reflects local need and is better linked to the CLD plan. The transition from 17 to six LLCPs is helping to reduce duplication. National partners report being able to remain involved in the LLCPs, lessening the number of meetings they need to attend. The Engage Aberdeenshire online community engagement hub for partners and the wider community provides better access to information. Its use is improving the sharing of information and data, and informing the development of the new CLD plan.

A newly-established evaluation framework is starting to develop a shared language across the various quality frameworks. Although at an early stage, it is a useful step which should help gather impact across the ALCP. Partners are aware that this needs to be further embedded as they move forward.

What happens next?

Overall, the local authority and its CLD partners are taking appropriate steps to address the main point for action and other recommendations identified during the progress visit. As a result, we will make no further visits to Aberdeenshire Council and its CLD partners in connection with this inspection.

Sheila Brown
HM Inspector
March 2025