

# Continuing engagement of community learning and development in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

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

Senior leaders continue to value the role that community learning and development (CLD) plays in contributing to local authority and Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) priorities. This includes their work on engaging communities as part of the current transformational change process the council is undertaking. However, the governance of CLD remains a significant area for improvement. Currently, there are no robust mechanisms in place to provide senior leaders with assurance that CLD provision best meets priority needs. The local authority has made very little progress in identifying shared CLD priorities. Reports have yet to be made regarding progress against the 2015-18 CLD plan, or the first year of the 2018-21 CLD plan. This is limiting the ability of leaders to monitor the effectiveness of CLD planning. There is a need for partners to come together to improve approaches to risk identification and mitigation. This would support them to jointly address common issues which affect the quality and quantity of provision such as the difficulty in recruiting to some posts. CLD leaders are aware of the continuing need to develop a more systematic approach to joint self-evaluation both within local authority CLD services and across CLD partners. Improving the shared coordination of training opportunities remains an area for action.

The positive ethos towards working in partnership remains strong. Harris Forum and the CLD partnership in Barra and Vatersay continue to work well as partnership forums. This is enabling partners to create shared action plans and progress aspects of work. Initial meetings have been held to create CLD partnerships in Lewis and Uist. There is a need to consider how these area partnerships will support the coordination, planning and reporting of CLD across all of the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar area. Partners should now clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of all existing and emerging partnership groups to ensure they can each add value and avoid duplication. CLD workers continue to play a key role in the Stornoway West Locality Partnership. Since the initial inspection communication has improved between the CLD service and key partners. The allocation of CLD staff to localities is starting to improve the coordination of work at community level. Youth and community voice continues to be valued by leaders and is well supported and strong. For example, Comann nam Pàrant in Stornoway successfully challenged local authority decisions on changes to the delivery of Gaelic Medium Education in P1. The group now focus on enhancing the learning offer and attaining funding for tutors to prepare children for the local Mòd. Community consultations and engagements are still regularly undertaken by a range of partners to identify need and inform priorities for action. The views gathered are increasingly influencing council priorities and planning, although this is not always clear to stakeholders. There continues to be a need to improve the coordination of consultations and the sharing of findings to avoid duplication and reduce the risk of alienating residents.

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

Overall, the quality of the learning programmes delivered by CLD partners continues to be of a good standard. The wide range of CLD providers, include many local and voluntary organisations, continue to deliver valuable community learning opportunities. Staff and volunteers respond well to meet expressed needs and the resulting new provision is enhancing the overall learning offer. For example, the Chill Out Group in the Nicolson Institute provides support to young people to help them overcome issues with mental health, wellbeing and confidence. The recently established Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (LGBTQI) youth group provides a safe space for young people to make friends and come together to build their resilience. The group are proactive in planning how they can support tolerance and enhance others' learning. Joint working between CLD service workers and staff employed through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is now established. This is providing additional support to children and young people transitioning to secondary school and is helping address priority issues such as reducing holiday hunger. Partners are now piloting a variety of family learning and parental learning opportunities in response to an identified gap in provision. Pointers Youth Centre are working in partnership with An Lanntair and the NHS to deliver the Full Circle family learning project to young mothers. Mothers are positive about the programme which is improving their social network and providing peer support.

Community and voluntary organisations and volunteers continue to provide a rich range of services, support learning and enhance their communities. Partners such as the Development Trusts in both Uig and Harris continue to make a positive impact in their communities. Each trust has measurable plans in place, which link to local authority strategic objectives. The parent run Còmhlà Group provides a valued forum and support for families in the North of Lewis who have children with additional support needs. Community organisations continue to improve local infrastructure. Both Comunn Eachdraidh Nis (Ness Historical Society) and Kinloch Historical Society have recently completed the redevelopment of their premises. These new multi-purpose spaces, cafes and study areas are able to meet a wider range of local needs.

However, there is little progress in developing joint targets and performance measures to better capture the full impact of CLD. There is limited capacity to demonstrate progress against planned outcomes or identify the added value of CLD. CLD leaders now need to consider how they can best work with CLD partners to better assess, understand and then monitor the difference CLD practice is making across the authority area. This will help to support the development of robust governance and reporting mechanisms for CLD. The current three-year CLD plan is not sufficiently measurable and most staff and partners consider the plan to be instrumental in directing or informing their work. There is need to ensure that plans, both existing and any arising from emerging partnerships, are outcome focused, measurable and have clear and well communicated lines of reporting. The pace of work to develop clear individual staff action plans informed by local needs and strategic priorities should now be accelerated. Officers are at an early stage in developing key performance indicators that can more fully measure progress and capture changing trends. Too often teams and partners are unaware of what happens with the data they currently provide or how it can be best used to drive improvement. This area now requires improvement to ensure that the individual and collective contribution of CLD is recorded and recognised.

### 3. Does the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar community have a clear sense of direction?

The direction of CLD provision across CLD in Eilean Siar is not sufficiently clear. Although partners are making progress against some aspects of work, the governance and performance management of CLD across the authority area continues to require significant improvement.

### 4. What happens next?

As we are confident that the provision for learners and communities remains of a good quality, we will not undertake further scrutiny in regard to these aspects of work. However, there has been insufficient progress made against the two main areas for improvement in the original report. As a result, we will return around 12 months from the publication of this report to monitor progress against these areas.

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