

Inspection of Community Learning and Development in Shetland Islands Council

22 May 2017

Contents

1. Context.....	1
2. How good is the strategic leadership of community learning and development?	1
3. How good is the learning and development in this community?	2
4. What happens at the end of the inspection?	4



1. Context

Community learning and development (CLD) partners within Shetland Islands Council and the area of Lerwick, Bressay and South Mainland (including Fair Isle) area were inspected by Education Scotland during March 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?

CLD is understood and respected by senior community planning leaders in Shetland and influences a range of strategic workstreams. Senior leaders value the input of CLD specialists in driving forward key priorities such as improving health and wellbeing and skills for employability. Leaders view community engagement and empowerment as key to strengthening the sustainability of communities. The CLD Partnership has made progress in improving the focus of CLD in its first year. Whilst partners recognise there is scope to further demonstrate where the partnership is adding value, the coherence between CLD and community planning priorities has been strengthened by these changes. Shetland Islands Council officers work well with partners in community planning groups to develop plans and outcome agreements against key strategic priorities. Partnerships are characterised by trust, with staff at all levels recognising and valuing each other's expertise. Strong partnership working, including between local organisations and services, is extending opportunities and improving outcomes for learners and communities. Youth clubs in villages are jointly resourced by communities and Shetland Islands Council.

Shetland's strong sense of community is valued and recognised as a key strength by community planning partners and this influences the development of strategy and policy. The Shetland Community Justice Plan was developed following stakeholder engagement. The plan recognises community capacity as a key asset in tackling the underlying causes of offending and reoffending. There is now a need to work with stakeholders, including community organisations, to jointly identify and plan to address emerging needs, challenges and risks. For example, currently a range of services and community organisations manage community assets across the area, some of which have considerable upkeep or refurbishment costs attached. There is a need for senior leaders and stakeholders to jointly identify the means to best address asset management concerns taking into account the collective capacity of services and volunteers. Partners are making progress in identifying and addressing inequalities. The Shetland Commission on Inequalities undertook innovative work to better identify hidden socio-economic issues including rural poverty. The findings have increased partners' understanding of inequalities in Shetland and this is helping them to challenge previously held assumptions. The information gained is informing aspects of strategic planning and the work of CLD partners. The report *On Da Level*, the short film *Make a Difference* and the provision of training for all staff is increasing understanding of the effects of inequalities.

CLD staff are experienced, and skilled. They are supported effectively to build their leadership capacity and are trusted to take forward new approaches and be creative. Partners work together effectively to improve awareness of and access to learning and development opportunities for staff and volunteers. Working groups provide effective opportunities for staff from a range of organisations to work together and learn from each other. This builds skills and knowledge leading to improvements in both learning programmes and signposting. Staff are supported effectively by senior leaders to be outward looking. They engage in regional and national networks and learn from effective CLD practice developed elsewhere. Individual projects and programmes are evaluated well using tools such as Illuminating Practice self-evaluations. Participant feedback is used well to inform adjustments and improvements to learning activities. However, partners do not consistently evaluate progress against CLD Strategic outcomes. There is considerable scope to improve analytical overview through establishing a cycle of systematic evidence based shared self-evaluation.

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

Across the area, partners deliver high quality activities which impact positively on learners and communities. Learners are actively engaged in influencing the shape and content of programmes designed to address identified priorities. Partners working on health improvement and on employability focused work use data and trends information effectively to target and tailor appropriate interventions. Mental health services are developed in response to analysis of data and community consultations. The higher than average rates of suicide in Shetland resulted in partners developing services focused on suicide prevention. Early indications show this has been effective with rates decreasing. Initiatives such as the *Mind Your Head's Grubby Huts*, which targeted men effectively in the workplace, support participants to access mental health support. Basing public health staff in localities has increased their capacity to reach specific 'at risk' groups. As a result they have exceeded their smoking cessation and weight management performance targets. Almost all school leavers in Shetland progress onto further education, training or employment on leaving school. Those at risk of not progressing receive effective and targeted support, such as *Shetland Bike Project* and the *Bridges Project*, to improve their employability skills. Over the last three years, over 80% of young people participating in the *Bridges Project* have achieved a positive destination. Shetland Islands Council CLD service plans set appropriate targets and performance reports show positive or stable trends in a number of key performance measures. CLD partners now need to improve the systematic collation and analysis of key performance data to inform their shared evaluation and planning.

Communities have a strong sense of place. A key strength is the high number of pro-active and inclusive community groups and organisations that deliver a range of services in their local areas. Volunteers successfully run Bigton Community Enterprise Limited shop and post office as a 'not for profit' community enterprise. Committee members have sustained this essential part of the local infrastructure benefiting the village economically and socially. Island communities demonstrate very high levels of resilience, resourcefulness and determination in addressing the challenges in sustaining their communities. The Fair Isle Community Association and Bressay Development Limited are delivering ambitious projects which progress their aims and improve the wellbeing of residents. Projects such as Bressay Development Limited's *community café*, *crèche*, *honesty library* and *good as new shop* help to bring the community together and reduce social isolation. Community organisations and volunteers

receive relevant advice, training and high quality support. Community Councils' involvement in decision making and role in engaging local communities was strengthened as a result of them working with over 500 people through the two Participatory Budgeting schemes run across the area. There is scope to build on the high level of community activism to increase the voice and influence of communities at strategic planning level. This would support services and communities to jointly improve outcomes and sustain progress across Shetland.

Volunteering is embedded in the culture of Shetland. High numbers of local volunteers of all ages make a significant contribution to the life of the islands. They run large scale events including Shetland Folk Festival, which are important to the economic and cultural life of Shetland. Community cafes run by volunteers across the area attract high numbers of both residents and tourists. They increase community cohesion and the resulting income supports a wide range of infrastructure, learning and social projects across the area. Young volunteers, supported effectively by staff and adult volunteers, contribute to and in many cases run a wide range of activities. *Maddrin Media* and *Shetland Young Promoters*, both run by a committee of young people and young adults, contribute to local festivals, run workshops and develop events such as the popular Battle of the Bands. Participants in the activities they run develop communication, technical and creative skills and in some cases progress to further education or employment in the arts. Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament are active and influential. They successfully persuaded Loganair to introduce a special student fare package. Youth Volunteering is celebrated effectively at the annual 'Youth Shetland Volunteering Awards' and through Saltire awards with 40,000 youth volunteer hours recorded last year. There is scope to better capture the impact community organisations and volunteers make to island life.

Residents of all ages benefit from the extensive range of activities across the area. Social integration is increased by young people, adults and older adults participating alongside and learning from each other in many groups. The effective support many learners receive to become volunteers and run their own provision increases the learning offer especially in smaller communities. For example, the Pink Hall Knitting Night at Hamnavoe, which attracts participants from 15-85 years old, was developed by learners. Young peer educators contribute effectively to the learning, safety and wellbeing of other young people. As a result of the well planned workshops run by young people leading the *Virtually Safe, Virtually Sound* project participants are more aware of online risks and have taken steps to improve their safety. Nearly 800 participants are more knowledgeable about drugs, alcohol, legal highs and sexual health after attending workshops lead by young people in the *Our Peer Education Network*. High numbers of young people participate in youth work, sporting and cultural activities. This supports many young people to gain local and national awards, however, there is scope to increase the numbers successfully completing awards. Partners should now jointly track young people's participation and achievement in order to identify and support any young people who do not currently participate and to ensure progression routes across providers.

Programmes which target specific needs are nearly always well planned, flexible, build on prior learning and developed with learners. Young people with a range of additional support needs improve their fitness, interpersonal relationships, confidence and emotional wellbeing at the well-paced Fitness, Attitude, Skills and Teamwork programme. The person centred approach taken at the *New Directions* class enables adults to progress at a pace that meets their individual needs whilst providing sufficient challenge. Learners are highly motivated and encourage each other to achieve. There is now a need for partners to ensure all adult learners receive appropriate guidance to enable them to progress and support to reflect on, recognise and celebrate their learning.

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

This inspection of CLD in Shetland Islands Council found the following key strengths.

- Well established culture of volunteering and community involvement increasing the learning offer and improving communities.
- Young people making a significant contribution to community life in Shetland.
- A rich and diverse range of learning and development opportunities which are enhancing lives.
- Well focused and targeted programmes meeting specific needs.

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

- Improve capacity to evaluate in order to develop an accurate overview of the impact of CLD work.
- Work with communities to develop a shared approach to addressing emerging needs.

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.

Alona Murray
HM Inspector
22 May 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	very good
Delivering the learning offer with learners	very good
Leadership and direction	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

Education Scotland

Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.education.gov.scot

© Crown Copyright, 2017

You may re-use this information (excluding images and logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence providing that it is reproduced accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Education Scotland copyright and the document title specified.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.