

# Community learning and development in Argyll and Bute Council

10 June 2019

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# 1. Context

Community learning and development (CLD) partners within Argyll and Bute Council and the area of Helensburgh and Lomond were inspected by Education Scotland during January and February 2019. 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?

Leadership of CLD and governance of the CLD plan 2018-2021 is devolved by the authority to a CLD strategic partnership. However, its membership and governance arrangements require strengthening. Across partners, there is not yet a shared understanding of vision, values and aims. As a result, the leadership of CLD is weak and requires focused attention. The CLD plan is underpinned by four thematic priorities. There is alignment between these, the CLD service plan and the local authority Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities. Annual reporting on progress of the CLD plan is in place. However, the local authority recognises that the CLD plan and service plan are insufficiently outcome-focused. This impacts negatively on their ability to collectively identify, capture and report on the impact of CLD. Similarly, there are very few examples of joint self-evaluation for continuous improvement. This requires urgent attention. Senior leaders and CLD partners value the role that council CLD staff make to service area priorities and in supporting learners and communities across Argyll and Bute. There is a positive ethos and culture of partnership working that enhances the support to learners and communities. CLD operational staff are empowered to work together to develop local solutions. For example, the Refugee Resettlement Group is effective in ensuring there are appropriate and timely responses to emerging needs.

Across Argyll and Bute, communities are regularly consulted on plans and priorities. There is good use of the Place Standard to engage communities and review needs. Feedback is informing the four Area Community Planning Groups (ACPGs) locality plans. However, the CLD partnership recognises that the coordination of community consultation and engagement could be improved. This will help to maximise resources and avoid over consulting. At a local level ACPGs help facilitate a wide range of partners coming together to address identified local needs. Three out of four area community planning groups are chaired by a local activist who also attends the Community Planning Partnership. This is helping to strengthen local voice in strategic decision-making. Similarly, youth voice is well developed at strategic level. For example, youth forums provide feedback on children's services plans and are actively involved in the development of the 'Our Children, Their Future' work.

Local authority CLD staff are empowered by senior managers to be creative in order to meet the needs of the learners and communities. Almost all staff benefit from a well-developed professional learning offer. A few staff attend a range of national thematic groups which is increasing awareness of national developments. Partners share training opportunities to enhance capacity. For example, Heart Start training resulted in increased confidence in dealing with issues related to

heart disease. In youth work, staff upskilling of teaching staff in Hermitage Academy to deliver achievement awards is beginning to increase uptake. Young people are supported well as volunteers through the youth engagement infrastructure. Support to the Helensburgh and Lomond Youth Forum (HLYF) and Junior Youth Forum is resulting in increasing confidence levels. A well-planned training programme for young volunteers at Route 81 is developing leadership capacity to take on the planning and delivery of the youth work programmes. However, partners are aware that developing a more coordinated and systematic approach to the training and support offer will help to enhance reach and effectiveness. This includes approaches to induction, support and supervision for all staff and volunteers to ensure they are all appropriately supported and safeguarded.

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

There are a few examples of appropriately targeted resources meeting the needs of learners with additional barriers. This includes Route 81, Opportunities for All and the multi-agency joint support team within Hermitage Academy. The school is working with partners to better track youth achievement. While at an early stage, the identification of under-participating groups is informing planning for targeted provision. Route 81 approaches to developing volunteers capacity resulted in 3,500 volunteering hours and 55 Saltire Awards. The multi-agency Joint Support Team is positively engaging young people in learning programmes within and outwith the school, such as the alternative timetable provision. Community-based adult learning evening class enrolments are increasing at Argyll College UHI within the Kirkmichael Centre. The increased capacity in the membership of the HLYF resulted in 64 young people taking part in the 'get inspired through volunteering' (GIVE) summer youth programme. However, approaches to joint planning for continuous improvement require significant development. This is negatively impacting on senior leaders' ability to measure or report on performance against aims and outcomes or identify trends in performance. The CLD partnership recognises the need to develop clear and measurable targets. This will assist staff and partners to recognise their contribution, jointly assess progress and report against planned priorities.

Ambitious and proactive community organisations are enhancing community life and infrastructure across the area. Increasingly the ACPG is acting as a key forum for groups to network and add value to each other's work. There are a few examples of partners and community organisations sharing building resources that are increasing the learning offer. For example, the Foodbank use of Fire and Rescue Service premises. In Arrochar, the volunteer-run Loch Long Jetty Association attracted funding in excess of £100,000 to support its aim to expand tourism to the village and enhance the local economy. The partnership between the council and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is enhancing the educational offer. Effective planning and evaluation of MOD provision demonstrates the positive social and educational impacts on young people, families and practitioners. The MOD professional learning community networking events for partners working with armed forces families is well attended and is developing a shared understanding of needs. However, wider partners recognise the need to explore jointly how to identify, strengthen and best target the community capacity building offer.

Across the area volunteers of all ages contribute positively to community life. Confident and skilled volunteers contribute to increasing wellbeing and inclusion. This includes learners affected by addiction and mental health issues who benefit from provision at the Welcome In Recovery Café and allotment. Similarly, the volunteer-run Helensburgh and Lomond Foodbank plays an important role in improving the wellbeing and cohesiveness of Helensburgh. High numbers access this high quality provision. The Kirkmichael Community Group weekly café for elderly residents is improving

wellbeing and tackling social isolation. Approaches to supporting and developing youth voice and leadership opportunities are good. Young volunteers at Route 81 are effectively delivering a strong youth work programme for their peers. Income generation is helping to sustain provision. Almost all HLYF members are developing life skills and gaining confidence. Achievements are recognised and celebrated through annual award ceremonies or gaining youth achievement awards. Youth forum member representation on the Helensburgh and Lomond ACPG and the Community Council is beginning to influence strategic decision making. However, partners would benefit from exploring jointly how to reduce the risk of volunteer fatigue.

In youth work there are a range of high quality and nurturing opportunities for young people to develop skills through taking on leadership roles. Achievement is recognised and celebrated. Many learning opportunities are tailored to individual need and are flexible and appropriately paced, for example, youth participation and youth voice learning opportunities. The HLYF and GIVE programme benefit from a safe and nurturing environment which is facilitating increased engagement by young people. Youth workers use an effective balance of challenge and support to ensure young people feel a strong sense of ownership over their activities. This is leading to positive outcomes for young people and family members such as improved communication skills, leadership, confidence and in some cases, behaviour. Young people and parents highly value the support from youth work staff. Route 81 have strong trusting relationships with young people. They benefit from a welcoming, safe and a positive environment that offers good opportunities for them to socialise, build relationships and seek out one-to-one support when required.

Staff, tutors and volunteers are effectively building trusting and nurturing relationships with adult learners. Appropriate levels of challenge and support are enabling learners to achieve and progress at an appropriate pace. In Helensburgh Library, employability and digital learners benefit from a positive learning environment. A few are progressing to volunteering, further learning or employment. Literacy learners influence the content and design of their learning programme and are clear about their next steps. Digital and literacies classes are tailored to the needs of each learner, taking account of prior learning. In English speakers of other languages classes a few adult learners are benefitting from a strong relationship between the local authority and a local employer. Conversational English is improving, which is helping to support employment. However, partnership approaches to developing the local adult learning offer are too sporadic and over-reliant on individual knowledge and local relationships. Progression routes are too focused on individual programmes or services. There is now a need to collectively strengthen the adult learning offer across the partnership. This includes a review of learner needs to ensure the collective offer can meet jointly identified and agreed priorities. Approaches to supporting learner voice and the celebration of achievement also requires attention.

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

This inspection of CLD in Argyll and Bute Council found the following key strengths.

- Ambitious community organisations and volunteers, improving communities and enhancing the learning offer.
- Youth voice and leadership opportunities, empowering young people to contribute to their communities.

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

- Strengthen the governance of CLD and develop a shared understanding of vision, values and aims.
- Improve approaches to planning for improvement, including developing a systematic approach to shared self-evaluation, jointly setting targets, monitoring and reporting on progress.
- Improve approaches to identifying the CLD offer across all partners to better inform resource allocation and joint planning.
- Strengthen the collective adult learning offer across the partnership.

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

There are significant improvements needed and partners do not yet have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. Education Scotland staff along with the education authority will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will revisit the local authority to check on progress within one year of publication of the report.

Ann Kivlin  
**HM Inspector**  
10 June 2019

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?](#).

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>weak</b>
<b>Impact on the local community</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Delivering the learning offer with learners</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Leadership and direction</b>	<b>weak</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

**Education Scotland**

Denholm House  
Almondvale Business Park  
Almondvale Way  
Livingston EH54 6GA

**T** +44 (0)131 244 4330  
**E** [enquiries@educationscotland.gov.scot](mailto:enquiries@educationscotland.gov.scot)

**[www.education.gov.scot](http://www.education.gov.scot)**

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