

Community learning and development (CLD) Arrangements for progress visits

2023

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1. Background

1.1 Introduction

Education Scotland HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) evaluate and report on, the quality of Community Learning and Development (CLD) provision within local authorities, in line with [The Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#) and associated guidance for local authorities.

HM Inspectors have developed the following interim arrangements for implementation from academic year 2023-24, to support improvement and provide external assurance of the quality of CLD provision in Scotland.

Through progress visits (PVs), HM Inspectors will take account of the extent to which local authorities are fulfilling their statutory duties in relation to CLD. During PVs, HM Inspectors will evaluate the progress local authorities and their CLD partners are making to improve the quality of provision and services.

1.2 Context

Between 2016 and 2019, HM Inspectors undertook inspections of CLD provision in all 32 local authorities in Scotland. A [summary](#) of the inspection findings was published in January 2020. The report highlighted key strengths and aspects for improvement in the leadership and delivery of CLD provision. Between November 2021 and June 2022, HM Inspectors completed five further inspections of CLD in local authorities where the need for further engagement was identified during a previous further inspection.

In March 2020, HM Inspectors recognised that local authorities and CLD partners faced challenges in adapting to the pandemic. As a result, the routine programme of inspections of CLD planning and delivery by local authorities was suspended. HM Inspectors will resume external evaluation of CLD in autumn 2023.

2. Methodology

2.1 Aims and objectives of the progress visits

These arrangements align with the ten [principles of inspection and review](#) and build on previous CLD inspection arrangements. In particular, HM Inspectors will work with local authorities and CLD partners to:

- **provide assurance** to Scottish Ministers, the public and other stakeholders of the quality of CLD provision;
- **promote capacity building** within and between local authorities, CLD partners and their key stakeholders;
- support local authorities and their CLD partners in using **effective quality improvement and joint self-evaluation approaches** to deliver the highest quality of provision and improve outcomes for learners and communities;
- draw on the impact of **local authorities and their CLD partners' own quality assurance** approaches to evidence improvement;
- **take account of the views of learners, community representatives, staff and volunteers**, and key stakeholders to assess performance;
- **gather examples of strong and effective practice** to be shared with the education system to inform and promote improvement;
- **involve Associate Assessors (AAs) as peer reviewers** in contributing to external review;
- **apply productive engagement approaches that are responsive to the needs of learners**, community representatives, staff, and key stakeholders;
- **minimise requirements for local authorities** and their CLD partners to produce supporting documentation;
- **develop an appropriate timetable** for each visit; and
- **provide feedback** during and after the visit.

PVs, during 2023-24, will help to provide an overview of the current quality and improvement in CLD leadership and governance across Scotland. They will also inform any future Scottish Government review of the CLD Regulations and Community Empowerment legislation and the implementation of CLD national strategies. The findings from PVs will also inform future approaches to inspection of CLD provision in Scotland.

2.2 Key features of progress visits

During PVs, HM Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of local authority CLD partnerships' approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and consider progress made against identified priorities in their CLD plans. As with previous inspections, the starting point will be the CLD plan and the local authority and partners self-evaluation.

In carrying out these visits, HM Inspectors will focus on the following high-level questions:

- How effective is the leadership of the local authority and their CLD partners in improving outcomes?

- How well does the performance of the local authority and their CLD partners demonstrate positive impact?

During the PV, HM Inspectors will undertake a programme of activities including:

- review of key documentation and performance data;
- professional dialogue with local authority CLD leaders, managers, staff, and volunteers;
- professional dialogue with key CLD partners leaders, managers, staff, and volunteers;
- focus group discussions with learners and community representatives; and
- a focused discussion on safeguarding.

HM Inspectors will identify what is working well, what needs to improve, and any next steps that may be required to secure improvement.

At the end of the visit, the team will discuss their findings with the CLD leads. A written report will be shared with the local authority for the purposes of accuracy checking. Approximately six weeks after the visit, a final written report will be provided to the CLD partnership and will be published on Education Scotland's website.

3. The quality framework

3.1 How good is our community learning and development?

The CLD quality framework, [How good is our community learning and development?](#) has 16 quality indicators (QIs), each one focused on a specific aspect of CLD leadership and delivery.

QIs are organised under three headings; performance and outcomes, management and delivery, and leadership and direction.

Each quality indicator has:

- A general statement and underpinning themes;
- Illustrations of very good practice for each theme; and
- Challenge questions.

3.2 Themes from quality indicators for the progress visits

The PVs will explore **five themes** across **four quality indicators**:

Leadership and Direction

- Governance (QI 6.1 Raising standards)
- Capacity for improvement (QI 6.2 Securing improvement)

Performance and Outcomes

- Analysis and use of data and other information (QI 1.1 Performance against aims and targets)

- Success for all (QI 2.3 Improving life chances)
- Skills for learning life and work (QI 2.3 Improving life chances)

3.3 Sources of evidence

The gathering of evidence on which to base findings will be carefully planned using sampling and cross-referencing across evidence sources. The key sources of evidence during external review are:

- professional dialogue;
- data and evidence provided by the local authority and CLD partners; and
- the views of stakeholders including learners and community representatives.

4. The progress visit process

4.1 The role of the Managing Inspector

PVs will be organised by a Managing Inspector (MI) who will work with the local authority CLD lead to plan all aspects of the visit. The MI will notify the local authority four weeks prior to the PV commencing. HM Inspectors will brief the local authority lead about the process and scope of the visit in advance. The MI is responsible leading and managing the PV team. An inspection administrator supports communication between the MI and the local authority.

4.2 Visit planning

PVs will typically last up to three days. The MI will meet with the local authority CLD lead in advance of the visit to discuss and agree the draft programme. This meeting may be held virtually. The programme may be adjusted during the visit as required to ensure that the team are able to gather all the necessary evidence to inform their findings. The programme may include evening activity to ensure that learners and community representatives are able to contribute their views. The local authority and their CLD partners will be asked to complete a short self-evaluation in advance of the visit and to provide key supporting documentation, such as their current CLD plan.

4.3 Composition and deployment of teams

Visit teams will comprise three team members, usually two HM Inspectors and an Associate Assessor (AA). AAs enhance the team's expertise through their first-hand experience and knowledge of the CLD sector.

4.4 Outcome of the progress visit

We will not apply evaluative grades for these interim arrangements in 2023-24. However, HM Inspectors will make an overall judgement on the progress that the local authority and their partners are making with the CLD plan as follows:

1. the local authority and their CLD partners are making sufficient progress and have the capacity to continue to improve; or

2. the local authority and their CLD partners are making sufficient progress in some areas, however some improvement is required; or
3. the local authority and their CLD partners are not making sufficient progress and there are important areas requiring improvement.

4.5 After the progress visit

On completion of the PV, the MI will produce a written report summarising the visit findings and outcomes. The report will contain the overall outcome of the visit and will highlight areas of strength and any aspects for development. As part of quality assurance arrangements, the local authority will have the opportunity to provide additional evidence, if appropriate, and review the draft report for accuracy. The final report will be issued to the CLD lead, shared with Scottish Government, and will be published on the Education Scotland website. Where the overall outcome of the PV identifies the need for improvement (options 23 or as outlined in section 4.4 above), the report will identify next steps for the local authority and their CLD partners. If a progress report or a further PV is needed, the report will set out what is required and when this should happen.

5. Conduct of visit teams

All discussions during progress visits should focus on the best interests of learners and communities and promote an open and honest exchange built on mutual respect and equity of status. The principles of our engagement with all stakeholders are outlined in the [PRAISE](#) framework.

Participants should understand clearly the purpose of meetings and the intended outcomes from the discussions.

During meetings, all participants should be encouraged to contribute their views. Requests for participants to provide documents to support evidence should only be by exception, as additional documentation must be kept to a minimum.

6. Resolving issues and complaints

Concerns should be raised in the first instance with the MI by the local authority during the visit. If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the senior managers involved, it should be pursued through Education Scotland's published [complaints procedure](#).

Please note that we cannot accept challenges to evaluations made about an establishment or service as part of inspection or review as part of our complaints handling procedure. This is because during the progress visit the establishment has the opportunity to provide all of the evidence needed for the inspection team to reach its evaluations.

Appendix 1 - The PRAISE Framework

The following principles have been identified as underpinning best practice:

Purpose – being clear about the overall purpose of the engagement with an establishment and retaining this throughout. Creating a shared agenda with staff in the establishment and amongst other Education Scotland colleagues who may be involved in initial or ongoing engagement.

Relationships – building and maintaining constructive relationships throughout the process as the basis of a high-quality engagement, providing support and challenge.

Awareness – maintaining a high level of awareness of the context in which staff are operating, of their feelings and reactions to the engagement process and of Education Scotland staff's own approach and its impact.

Information gathering – careful inquiry to gather and understand information. Retaining an objective stance, testing assumptions, and assimilating data before identifying what is working well, and where support would be beneficial.

Sharing information – communicating thoroughly throughout the engagement process to prepare and inform staff. Encouraging staff to be open in providing their perspective and providing appropriate feedback as the engagement process progresses.

Enabling – treating people with respect, engaging them in professional dialogue, recognising their efforts and providing conclusions in a constructive way to encourage ownership and learning to take place.

Purpose – being clear about the overall purpose of the engagement and retaining this throughout. Creating a shared agenda with staff in an establishment and amongst other Education Scotland colleagues who may be involved in initial or ongoing engagement.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity

- be prepared well in advance.
- ensure you know as much as possible about the establishment's context and bear this in mind throughout the conversation.
- have an open mind to others' ideas and perspectives; and
- create a shared understanding of purpose of the engagement.

During the engagement activity

- build a shared agenda – establish common ground and a commitment to working together.
- refer back to purpose of the engagement activity to confirm type and range of information required.
- retain focus on priorities in managing own and others' time.
- use a coaching approach to the discussion to enable the participants to fully explain their thinking and support them to self-identify and overcome obstacles.

- focus on quality of recovery planning; and aim to support improvements, minimising negative impact to those involved.
- manage staff/stakeholder expectations of the process; and
- demonstrate that the discussion has your full attention.

End of the engagement activity

- keep in mind the desired outcomes – use to inform **how** to deliver conclusions from the engagement.
- offer suggestions from effective practice perspective; and
- agree a timeline for further contact if required.

Relationships – building and maintaining constructive relationships throughout the process as the basis of a high-quality engagement, providing support and challenge.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity

- make a friendly first contact early, to set a positive tone and good first impression.
- be accessible to respond to queries in a timely manner; and
- provide information to explain and reassure the supportive nature of the meeting.

During the engagement activity

- aim to develop an equal relationship to reduce the barrier your job role can create.
- establish an appropriate tone.
- treat others with respect.
- demonstrate empathy with their experience.
- retain a good-humoured manner.
- model an open communication style.
- provide reassurance to staff about the integrity of the process to maximise value and accuracy of conclusions; and
- choose an appropriate time and manner of sharing tricky messages.

End of the engagement activity

- use humour carefully – or not at all.
- be mindful of style and tone of delivery.
- allow the person to hear and accept the messages.
- seek acknowledgement of the message, adjusting pace.
- acknowledge emotional response in others - e.g., long silence, allow space, then move on.
- monitor response to the sharing of messages; and
- agree a timeline for further contact if required.

Awareness – maintaining a high level of awareness of the context in which staff are operating, of their feelings and reactions to the engagement process and of Education Scotland staff's own approach and its impact.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity

- recognise the context and previous experience of the establishment to anticipate concerns or difficulties.
- ensure that unnecessary disruption is not created in planning contact and activity.
- contextualise the briefing for staff – make it personal;
- seek to understand any issues that might be affecting staff morale or ability; and
- seek to understand any issues which may be affecting a learning situation - e.g., behavioural difficulties/turnover of staff.

During the engagement activity

- recognise pressures staff may be under in manner and timing of contacts in addition to those related to the engagement activity.
- retain awareness of own style and its impact on others.
- maintain calm and controlled demeanour.
- recognise your own reactions and respect other people's; and
- if in doubt, stop and ask – phone a colleague to talk things through.

End of the engagement activity

- set up arrangements to create an appropriate atmosphere where possible.
- help the listeners get beyond taking conclusions personally.
- ensure efforts to improve are suitably acknowledged.
- focus on own contribution to ensuring conclusions are received constructively; and
- take confidence from thoroughness of own work, evidence, and organisation behind you.

Information gathering – careful inquiry to gather and understand information. Retaining an objective stance, testing assumptions, and assimilating data before identifying what is working well, and where support would be beneficial.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity

- use ongoing engagement guidelines – plan the order and structure; and
- prioritise and decide what matters, without trying to cover everything at once.

During the engagement activity

- ensure fair and thorough coverage of evidence.
- stay open and objective when gathering the facts.
- keep thinking and reflecting.
- seek first to understand, before reaching conclusions.
- start with open questions, follow up to probe further.
- listen carefully and examine information before making decisions about how to act.
- record and gather information which takes account of freedom of information (FOI) and GDPR requirements.
- ensure evidence base for conclusions is sound and will withstand challenge.
- share findings as you go.
- triangulate information, analyse, then synthesise the information gathered.
- allow flexibility in the timetable/schedule of contacts.

End of the engagement activity

- ensure the information for sharing conclusions is accurate and developmental.

- be as constructive as possible.
- ensure conclusions are thorough and balanced.
- ensure coverage is proportionate.
- anticipate a planned, structured challenge from leaders.
- ask for further information for challenge; remain objective; and
- allow scope for adapting the conclusions in the light of further additional information.

Sharing information – communicating thoroughly throughout the engagement process to prepare and inform staff. Encouraging staff to be open in providing their perspective and providing appropriate conclusions as the engagement progresses.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity

- provide helpful, advance information for all involved, especially if a multi-site provision.
- check briefing has been useful and understood; and
- consult with the establishment to identify possible obstacles during process.

During the engagement activity

- create enough time for conversations and professional dialogue.
- reflect, summarise what you have heard; and
- arrange further contacts as necessary to follow up on specific points as they emerge – allow managers to respond.

End of the engagement activity

- explain process of gathering information as well as conclusions.
- clarify the features that informed the conclusions.
- use recorded notes/text during final sharing of conclusions.
- create opportunities for further dialogue and contacts to aid clarity and understanding.
- share conclusions confidently and objectively; and
- in presenting conclusions, provide well-judged examples to help people to understand.

Enabling – treating people with respect, engaging them in professional dialogue, recognising their efforts and providing conclusions in a constructive way to encourage ownership and learning to take place.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity

- aim to make the experience positive for everyone working alongside.
- encourage staff to ask questions.
- set a supportive, encouraging tone; and
- acknowledge the pressures an engagement activity can create and how you can help to minimise these.

During the engagement activity

- demonstrate genuine desire to learn about the uniqueness of the establishment and to help them to improve.
- invite staff and stakeholders to share what they feel proud of and recognise their efforts to improve.

- encourage them to contribute thoughts about what needs to change or develop.
- reassure staff that your expectations are realistic.
- show interest in their intent as well as their action.
- encourage staff to take ownership in providing additional information.
- involve staff in professional dialogue; peer-to-peer.
- nurture discussion – generate a dynamic that fosters thinking, reflection, openness.
- help staff to self-evaluate; and
- share conclusions that are positive, as well as guidance on ways to improve further.

End of the engagement activity

- share structure of the engagement activity guidelines; encourage people to take ownership.
- build on the positives; give credit wherever possible; convey areas for further development constructively.
- share conclusions in a supportive manner.
- recognise good practice and achievement.
- acknowledge commitment and effort.
- when necessary, explain what is needed to achieve the next level.
- use phrases that are positive and forward looking e.g., 'not yet' and/or 'have begun to'.
- provide guidance on strategies to move forward.
- share examples of excellence from others; and
- provide conclusions directly to staff, as much as possible.

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