



Community learning and development in South Ayrshire Council

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1. Context

Community learning and development (CLD) partners within South Ayrshire Council and the area of Ayr North and villages were inspected by Education Scotland during February and March 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?

Senior leaders demonstrate clear vision and leadership and value the contribution of CLD towards strategic priorities. CLD leaders are pro-active in planning for change. The CLD plan is clearly located under the local outcome improvement plan's strategic themes and the council priorities. This supports CLD partners to understand how their work contributes to strategic priorities. A wide range of partners contribute to and have ownership of the CLD plan. There is a strong and positive ethos of partnership working. Across South Ayrshire partners are adept at working together to enhance the learning offer and jointly solve problems. Strategic and area partnerships enable partners to share practice and expertise, identify gaps, avoid duplication and enhance each other's learning offer. However, the council and partners recognise there is currently an element of confusion and potential duplication between various strategic, area and thematic planning groups and strategies. Partners should continue to improve how they align services and plans in order to develop more efficient CLD planning and delivery structures at all levels.

There is a clear and impactful strategic drive to improve outcomes for young people. The move to locate CLD officers within children's services is supporting the focus on mitigating deprivation and raising attainment. Schools enjoy a positive and productive relationship with CLD. At all levels there is strong commitment to improving outcomes for care experienced young people. The Champions Board, made up of care experienced young people, is effective in ensuring young people's voices are heard at a senior level and in holding agencies to account. Young people have designed and delivered Corporate Parenting training to over 870 stakeholders. The needs of care experienced young people are now embedded in local authority youth work structures. South Ayrshire Youth Forum is effective at ensuring youth voice is heard at strategic level. Its members use feedback from successful consultations to actively contribute to the design of relevant plans. In a recent Make Your Mark survey, 50% of the 11-18 population submitted responses. There is now a need to increase community voice in strategic planning. There are examples where community representatives are involved in area level planning however, there are too few opportunities for community members to fully contribute to and thereby strengthen strategic level decision making. Although youth voice is strong at strategic level, it is less well developed at both area and local level.

CLD service officers evaluate individual programmes effectively and use this information to plan for improvement. Their action planning model is needs led and outcomes focused. CLD planning and evaluation is not systematically undertaken collectively across partners. There is now a need to increase shared self-evaluation to better assess the collective offer and to inform joint planning and reporting of progress. The council is active in promoting a shared sense of purpose and pride

across its workforce. Operational staff increasingly feel empowered. They are well supported and are trusted to balance local needs with strategic and national drivers. Professional development opportunities are enhancing practice. A notable feature is the strong culture of 'growing our own'. There is a well-established pathway from participation and volunteering to paid work. Council officers are at the early stages of working together to enhance the induction and support to volunteers. There is scope to consider how partners can be involved in this development.

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

Partners make good use of statistical and performance information to identify and target need and improve provision. Partners delivering youth employability programmes use data well to match programmes to needs. This has positive results with, for example, 90 of the 100 pupils in the Work Out programme progressing to a positive destination. Active Schools staff access school data to analyse activity levels and influence the development of programmes. Their use of Scottish attainment challenge funding has provided an increased resource within Braehead, Dalmilling and Newton Primary Schools. As a result, all children in these schools now participate in an extra-curricular activity. The CLD service set targets for specific programmes. However, partners are aware of the need to develop shared, measurable targets for CLD. The actions laid out in the CLD plan from all key partners provide a strong starting point from which to do this. CLD service qualitative and quantitative reports support staff to reflect on how well provision is working, compare progress against previous years and take action on any downwards trends. Almost all trends are either stable or positive. The number of young people living in lower income areas who register on CLD service youth provision has increased over the last three years, from 86% to 95%. The number of hours learners in community based adult learning provision participated in Ayr North has risen substantially from 1,697 in 2015-16 to 3,885 in 2017-18. In 2017-18 South Ayrshire had the highest number of completion rates for The Duke of Edinburgh's Awards in Scotland. There is scope to improve the shared analysis of performance information across partners to capture the overall picture of CLD provision and its impact in Ayr North and the villages. This would support joint planning and reporting, including how resources are allocated.

Community organisations, volunteers and learners work well with services to improve local communities, grow a positive sense of place and reduce social isolation. Children at Newton Primary School in the 'Freestyle Environmental Visual Audit' programme contribute well to how clean and safe their local community is. 'Ahead for Health Community Builders' is effective in supporting local people in Wallacetown and Craigie to actively engage in a range of community-led initiatives. This supports a growing sense of community. Craigie residents actively share their knowledge and experience with young people in the Ayr Academy Horticulture group. Produce from the group is shared between the school kitchen and a local community café which supports people on low income. Lochside Neighbourhood Group members promote a sense of pride in their community. They provide an effective forum for local residents to raise issues with elected members and council officers. Community members in Lochside have developed a weekly community café in response to local need. This is having an impact on reducing social isolation and improving the mental health and wellbeing of both volunteers and community participants.

Volunteers contribute well to the learning offer. Across South Ayrshire, over 90 volunteers run literacies and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) one-to-one sessions, drop-ins and groups. Volunteers receive support which builds their wellbeing, enables them to gain skills and supports many to progress into other opportunities including employment. As a result of participating in the 'Programme for Adults Volunteering in Schools' project volunteers have more confidence and self-worth. Networks, often informal, across the area are strong. Participatory

Budgeting events are effective in raising aspirations and building relationships between volunteer groups. Whilst the majority of community activists and organisations receive nurturing support, there is scope to review how the collective community capacity building offer is planned, communicated and delivered. There is now a need to ensure that the overall resource is used as effectively and efficiently as possible. In particular, there is currently a need to consider how partners can best support the sustainability of local voluntary organisations and support networks. Community organisations and activists would benefit from further support to enable them to engage with services as fully empowered, equal and independent partners. Too often communities and groups see workers as being the driving force behind initiatives rather than themselves.

Local people benefit from a rich learning offer that includes a wide range of universal and targeted provision. Open youth clubs and community based adult learning provision enables people of all ages to gain confidence in their capacity to learn. A variety of well-run family learning activities are supporting parents to be more confident in engaging with the schools around their child's education. Staff ensure the pace of learning in the cooking programmes in early years centres and primary schools is appropriate. Parents enjoy learning alongside their children and use what they have learnt at home. Children increase their confidence to read at PAWS for Reading groups. Children are relaxed and fully engage in reading. Across learning provision staff and volunteers are proficient at building strong and nurturing relationships with participants and developing programmes informed by learner feedback. Young people in the Boys Transition Group at Belmont Academy receive appropriate support and challenge, enabling them to develop resilience, grow in confidence and learn coping strategies. Staff delivering employability and skills programmes take prior learning and each learner's circumstances into account and adapt provision accordingly.

Across the area the learning offer is improving lives. The systematic use of learner tracking, learning plans and participant feedback by the CLD service helps staff to provide appropriate support based on individual learner needs. Women's Groups at Café Connections and Lochside provide vital support to women facing challenges in their lives. These well-run groups reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing for almost all of the participants. At Lochside Women's Group an effective referral process ensures that the service is targeted appropriately. Use of home visits overcomes barriers to participation. The Lochside Creative Corner Arts Group is well planned and tailored to individual need. Participants are actively engaged in the planning process. They have a clear sense of pride and achievement. Across South Ayrshire a range of celebrations of learning and volunteering and the increasing use of awards are increasing the recognition of achievement and progress. The CLD service should continue to progress plans to support schools in the area to better track achievements and skills. This will help partners to work together to make sure all children and young people are supported well to achieve and to have their achievements recognised and built on. There is scope for partners to better coordinate the learning offer to avoid duplication, use resources efficiently and build on each other's work. This should include further developing learner pathways across partners' provision.

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

This inspection of CLD in South Ayrshire Council found the following key strengths.

- Strong commitment across partners and leaders to improving lives.
- Volunteers enhancing learning programmes and strengthening communities.
- The wide range of high quality and well targeted learning activities.
- Learning opportunities which increase wellbeing and reduce social isolation.

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

- Develop more efficient and sustainable planning and delivery structures at all levels.
- Build on the CLD plan to set joint targets and increase self-evaluation across partners.
- Strengthen the community capacity and empowerment building offer across partners.

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
29 April 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.

Improvements in performance	good
Impact on the local community	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

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