

Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

South Lanarkshire Council

2 July 2024

1. Context

HM Inspectors visited South Lanarkshire Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during May 2024. During the visit, we talked to learners and community representatives, CLD leaders, managers, staff, and volunteers, and other key stakeholders. HM Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of local authority CLD partnerships' approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and considered progress made against identified priorities in their CLD plans.

2. Findings from the progress visit

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

Areas of positive progress

The leadership of CLD at all levels is strong. The overall governance of CLD is clear and effective. Members of the CLD Partnership are confident and have a clear vision and drive for improvement. Partners work together effectively and respect each other's roles and contribution to shared strategic objectives. Staff and volunteers are committed, passionate and focused on making improvements to the lives of individuals and communities. The Youth Family and Community Learning (YFCL) service, together with the CLD Partnership, lead effectively on the development of the CLD Plan. A wide range of partners contribute well and confidently to a set of shared CLD priorities, which, in turn, contributes clearly to the Community Planning Partnership's (CPP) priorities. Progress is reported regularly to a variety of strategic groups, including directly to the CPP Board. As a result, the CLD contribution to shared priorities is widely recognised and valued highly by senior leaders. The YFCL service leadership team has a very good understanding of CLD's strengths and areas for development. This is informed well through collective information sharing by key partners and through effective self-evaluation. The current Locality Action Planning Groups (LAPGs) and sub-groups are effective forums for CLD practitioners to network, make connections and help drive local improvement. Young people are supported well by CLD staff to influence change and engage regularly and confidently with senior officers and elected members. Their voices are heard and valued. Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament also contributed to decisions that helped to establish the national young persons' free bus travel scheme.

Robust policies, procedures and systems are helping staff at all levels to support and sustain improvement within the current challenging financial environment and pressure on available resources. As a result, staff and partners are able to maintain high-quality provision which impacts positively on individuals and communities. All CLD staff use consistent approaches to project planning and evaluation. This ensures effective reporting against priorities. Case studies are used very well to demonstrate impact. Effective partnership working and local community engagement approaches, such as community events and door knocking, is helping to ensure wider participation. The 'Our Place Our Plan' process is helping to shape community planning at a local level. As a result, local community representatives are active participants in neighbourhood planning. Representatives from local communities who sit on the CPP are listened to, included, and feel valued.

Staff at all levels are well-supported, encouraged and trusted to lead. They are highly-valued, listened to and empowered. There is a strong and well-embedded approach and culture of staff development. For example, a significant number of staff within the council and key CLD partners

start their career as a youth work participant, become a volunteer and progress to employment. Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake a range of qualifications, from entry level to master level learning. This, alongside ongoing professional learning opportunities, supports staff well to carry out their roles to a high standard. For example, YFCL staff and key CLD partners benefit from access to a wide range of ongoing multi-agency training. Almost all YFCL staff and volunteers, and a few CLD partners, are trained in trauma-informed approaches. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) staff and partners have good access to professional learning. Volunteers also appreciate accessing these training and development opportunities.

Areas for development

The LAPGs, one of which is not currently active, are at too early a stage in their development to demonstrate significant impact. Improved governance of the CLD Plan at a local level is an aspirational stretch aim for senior leaders. It is important that the LAPGs are supported to develop at an appropriate pace, enabled to share effective practice, and that their connection to the CLD Partnership is strengthened further.

Community members are not currently active participants at a strategic level within CLD planning and decision-making. Young people and community members have a variety of opportunities to share their views and influence strategic decision-making across the council and CPP. However, it is not sufficiently clear how this directly impacts on current and ongoing CLD priorities.

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

Areas of positive progress

Staff and partners have a strong shared understanding of the needs and priorities of individuals and communities across the council area. This understanding is informed well by use of demographic and other data at a strategic level. Partners are also effective at an operational level in using local data and intelligence to understand the emerging needs of individuals and communities. Data shows clearly that CLD partners are having a positive impact on individuals, families and communities. For example, the Pathfinders Programme, which runs successfully in seven secondary schools, has engaged with 534 young people and their families in 2023-24. This is well above the target of 350. The 'GIVIT' Youth Recovery Service systematically gathers and records positive impacts on young peoples' lives. CLD data gathered for CLD Managers Scotland Key Performance Indicators shows generally positive trends over the past four years. For example, more young people are gaining nationally recognised awards and the number of children and young people with improving mental health and wellbeing has doubled since 2020-21. Community groups receiving support has almost tripled since 2020.

Overall, there is a strong and clear focus on working with individuals and communities who are in need of the most support. Partners are working proactively to remove barriers to participation and helping those living in disadvantaged communities and circumstances to achieve and progress in their lives. All of the young people attending the Vertigo Theatre drama group, including those with additional support needs, benefit from the inclusive welcoming ethos. They are gaining in confidence, and a few young people are overcoming their anxiety. The Mobilize music project is helping increasing numbers of young people to prepare for a potential career in the music industry. Approaches such as affordable instrument loans and low-cost rehearsal room hire is helping to maintain the running of the project, whilst also removing potential barriers to participation. The GIVIT Youth Recovery Service provides a valuable lifeline for young people

suffering from alcohol and substance abuse. Care experienced young people in the Champions Board effectively represent the views of young people who are marginalised and less able to have a voice. Targeted provision for adults with a wide range of additional support needs is helping to tackle social isolation and promote positive health and wellbeing. Partners working within Family Support Hubs are supporting parents and children to improve engagement with school and other agencies. As a result, most families attending the programme report that this is leading to positive changes in their child's behaviour. Strong partnership working across the Financial Inclusion Network is directing resources to those most in need, which is helping to address poverty, inequality and food insecurity. A 146% increase in food bank use has prompted a greater focus on finding solutions aimed at addressing issues such as hoarding and social isolation. The Community Corner is also helping to address identified concerns around social isolation due to a lack of opportunities locally to come together. Group members provide mutual support, learn new skills and strengthen companionship.

Across a wide range of programmes and projects, young people and adult learners are gaining skills and experiences, which are helping them to meet their goals and aspirations. For example, the young people-led Universal Connections committee at East Kilbride are developing their leadership skills, whilst making decisions about funding and programming within the building. This is leading to new provision, such as basketball, and effective decisions about how profit from the café is used. Almost all young people in the Pathfinder Programme are engaging better with school or other learning, supported by a trauma-informed approach. Carlisle High School report increased levels of attainment and positive destinations from young people engaged in the programme, as well as improving attendance. ESOL learners are developing new skills and improving their spoken and written English, many are moving on to college, and a few are gaining employment. They can now respond more effectively with everyday situations, such as using the phone and booking appointments. A few adult learners with a personal interest or family connection with the Gaelic language benefit from the opportunity to learn in a relaxed and supportive environment. Almost all adult learners have up to date learning plans, which are used well to capture progress, identify their strengths and review goals.

Areas for development

Data and performance information and trends are not currently analysed sufficiently well at a locality level through the LAPGs. Senior leaders should continue to drive improvement to ensure that LAPGs and associated groups make effective use of local data. This in turn will help to better inform strategic planning and evaluation at CLD Partnership level. Similarly, the CLD Partnership will benefit from jointly and more routinely interrogating performance data to inform and drive improvement. This should help to strengthen further the next CLD Plan.

3. Practice worth sharing more widely

The 'GIVIT' Youth Recovery Service provides a valuable lifeline for young people suffering from alcohol and substance abuse. Youth 'navigators' support young people well to address issues in their lives and offer sustainable alternatives to addiction. Through the support from GIVIT, many young people benefit from a wide range of activities including peer support, cooking on a budget and outdoor activities. A few young people are progressing to college and employment. GIVIT systematically gathers and records impacts on young peoples' lives. From 34 referrals between January and March 2024, 10 young people achieved a positive destination. Ninety-seven percent of the young people reported at least one positive change in their life, 87% reported at least two positive changes and 73% recorded three. Between January and December 2023, 87% of young people reported at least one positive outcome due to attending the project. In

2023, cases were allocated to a youth 'navigator' within 72 hours and 100% of young people received support and guidance for alcohol abuse.

4. What happens next?

The local authority and their CLD partners are making sufficient progress with their CLD plan and have the capacity to continue to improve. As a result, HM Inspectors will take no further action in relation to this progress visit. During the inspection, we identified an aspect of highly effective practice which we would like to explore further.

Simon Ross
HM Inspector
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