

# Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

**Renfrewshire Council**

16 April 2024

## 1. Context

HM Inspectors visited Renfrewshire Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during February 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.

In recent years, the leadership of CLD has been through a period of significant change. The CLD team is now led by the Head of Policy and Partnerships within the Chief Executive's Service.

## 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 recent service review has helped align the CLD team more strategically with community planning structures. Although at an early stage, this is increasing stakeholder awareness of the CLD offer across strategic groups. Regular reporting of the CLD team's progress on council priorities is understood by the majority of local authority staff and partners. Partners are making progress on the shared ambitions to tackle poverty, address inequality and increase community voice. Care experienced young people and young carers engaged in the Promise Arts and Culture Programme are exploring new ways to have their voices heard. This includes a co-created animation based upon lived experience of the foster care system which is used well as a training tool for The Promise keepers. Engage Renfrewshire work well with a range of partners. They provide effective support to community groups and organisations, helping them grow and develop. The CLD team also regularly report their progress against the CLD strategy to the council's Communities and Housing Board.

Several core partners work well with the council to identify needs and use evidence at a local level to target resources. Relationships between partners are based upon mutual respect and trust. This is helping partners to work together to develop common goals and use flexible approaches to support improvement in some areas. CLD staff, at all levels, access a broad range of training and development opportunities through national, regional and local networks. All staff within the CLD team are members of the CLD Standards Council for Scotland and access member events regularly. This is helping to increase their understanding of the current policy landscape and to adapt service delivery to improve experiences and outcomes for learners.

#### Areas for development

The leadership and governance of CLD is not yet able to demonstrate effectively how the local authority works with partners to improve outcomes. There are currently no strategic arrangements in place, which involve partners, to oversee the governance of CLD. As a result, CLD partners do not have ownership of the CLD strategy and currently have limited understanding of the priorities or how progress will be measured. The council should progress, at pace, their plans to establish an appropriate strategic partnership for CLD. This will help to strengthen the governance and leadership of CLD at all levels. The CLD strategy is not yet fully

measurable. This is impacting negatively on the ability of CLD partners to report the collective impact and progress towards meeting the legislative duties set out in The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013. There is scope to strengthen and formalise existing networks and extend the role of community members and learners in CLD planning and decision-making. This will help to improve the governance of CLD, reduce duplication and ensure that CLD priorities reflect community needs.

Self-evaluation is not understood sufficiently well by CLD partners. They are not clear about how this is driving their work and how it is leading to improvement. CLD leaders now need to develop further their approach to self-evaluation with partners, ensuring that progress against CLD priorities is evidenced. There is no consistent reporting of external partners contribution to the priorities set out in the CLD strategy. Senior leaders and CLD partners now need to progress at pace their plans to review the current CLD strategy. This will help with preparation of a new CLD plan in line with the legislative requirement to publish the plan on 1 September 2024.

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

#### **Areas of positive progress**

The CLD team gather a wide range of data and use case studies well to demonstrate positive impacts for learners and communities. They use this information to help inform service priorities and target resources effectively to those areas most in need. Performance information for targeted programmes including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), adult literacy and work with schools show positive upward trends. Similarly, there is a significant rise in the number of young people participating in and completing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. At a strategic level, Street Stuff use data effectively to target their interventions with young people. As a result, anti-social behaviour across Renfrewshire, in recent years, has decreased. An estimated 86% of the eligible population in Renfrewshire reregistered for the Young Scot national entitlement card in 2023, one of the highest in the country. Partners with responsibility for safeguarding systematically gather intelligence and make effective use of data to identify concerns and gaps in local areas. As a result, they are more able to develop appropriate community approaches to help and protect those most at risk.

There is a strong volunteering culture and clear pathways to support progression for volunteers within Renfrewshire CLD, which is helping to remove barriers to participation. Volunteers are valued and supported well to build on their skills, gain qualifications and progress to paid employment. Volunteers involved with Broadloan Community Gardens and Team Up to Clean Up are making a significant contribution to improve the local environment and establish a sense of pride. The CLD team works closely with schools and other partners to improve learning pathways for young people who are the most disadvantaged or experiencing mental health and wellbeing difficulties. Several projects, such as Evolve, are removing barriers to participation and increasing opportunities for accredited learning. Young people are gaining important life skills and are able to reflect well on their learning journey and understand the impact it has on them. Adult learners facing challenges in their lives are benefiting from a range of opportunities to learn new skills, achieve and attain. Most adult learners are able to describe how they have overcome challenges and have improved social networks.

Renfrewshire Youth Voice is successfully giving young people a say in issues that impact their lives. Climate Change Champions are actively engaged in learning for sustainability and have increased their knowledge and undertaken biodiversity projects. Through these projects, young

people are gaining skills in public speaking through organising events and campaigns and are making a positive contribution to their communities. Working together with schools, the CLD team provide targeted approaches to increase support to young people to develop skills for learning, life and work. For example, support to Ukrainian young people has increased their access to education and is improving attendance. They are developing their skills and social networks. A few Ukrainian learners are progressing to paid employment, voluntary work or further education. Young people's contributions are celebrated regularly through the Positive About Youth Awards. Individual and group learning plans are used well to support the progress of ESOL learners to develop their language and communication skills specific to their needs. A few learners are now better able to support their child's learning and engage better with the school. Participation in classes is helping ESOL learners to reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing.

### Areas for development

The use of performance information and reporting on progress by CLD partners is not sufficiently well developed. Similarly, arrangements to inform planning, monitoring and reporting on progress towards the CLD strategy are not formalised or consistent. As a result, CLD partners do not have a strong understanding of how they are sharing or using data collectively. This is leading to under-reporting of the full impact of CLD. Further work is required to develop a monitoring framework to inform planning, monitoring and reporting collective progress against the CLD strategic plan.

The lack of a strategic approach to achievement across partners means that young people are at risk of missing out on additional opportunities to gain formal accreditation. There is scope to increase the range of achievement opportunities available for young people.

### 3. Main points for action

The following main points for action are required.

- As a matter of priority, the local authority and its partners should strengthen the leadership and governance of CLD in line with legislative requirements. This includes continuing with plans to establish a CLD strategic partnership and formalising appropriate networks to improve the governance of CLD.
- CLD partners should agree and set clear outcomes and measures of success. There is a need to develop partnership priorities at a strategic level. Leaders with responsibility for CLD should ensure arrangements are in place to improve reporting across partners and support joint planning for improvement.

#### 4. What happens next?

HM Inspectors found that the local authority and their CLD partners are not making sufficient progress with their CLD plan and have identified important areas requiring improvement. As a result, we will visit the local authority again approximately one year following the publication of this report to evaluate progress made by the local authority and their CLD partners in addressing these.

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