

# Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

**Stirling Council**

24 October 2023

## 1. Context

HM Inspectors visited Stirling Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during September 2023. 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

Across Stirling Council, leadership of CLD is strong. Senior leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the role and function of CLD and how this is leading to improved outcomes for learners and communities. Regular reporting on the outcomes of the CLD Plan is helping to highlight CLD approaches across the Stirling area. The ambitions of the CLD plan are well embedded across the Schools, Learning and Education priorities. As a result, there is a clear understanding of the role and impact of CLD services across schools which is valued by senior leaders. CLD structures are directly linked to community planning structures to ensure that CLD planning actively contributes to strategic priorities. Linkages to the Executive Group and Senior Officers Group is ensuring that gaps in provision can be identified and action taken to address them.

The priorities in the CLD Plan for 2021-24 focus appropriately on three high level ambitions; employment and training opportunities, mental health and wellbeing and digital inclusion. Most partners take ownership of the three priority areas and recognise how their work contributes to their achievement. The three ambitions for CLD fit very well with the ambition of tackling poverty and inequality contained in the Stirling Plan. Sub-groups for the three CLD thematic areas report regularly to the CLD Collaborative to ensure accountability. The role of the Community Planning Partnership is increasingly recognised by a range of partners as a valuable mechanism to ensure progress against set targets.

Across CLD partners, there is a shared understanding of the ambitions in the CLD Plan. Relationships across the CLD Collaborative and associated sub groups are based upon mutual trust and respect. Partners have a shared understanding of CLD priorities and are working well to use person centred approaches to address barriers to participation. Frontline Worker meetings are improving information sharing, reducing duplication and delivering on the ambitions in the CLD Plan. CLD staff at all levels have responsibility to lead on key areas of work. The CLD Upskilling group has delegated responsibility and is supported to lead a good range of upskilling opportunities for staff and partners. Community Councils and development trusts are increasing their effectiveness as a result of support from CLD staff. Effective community development support provided across the Eastern Villages and other communities is providing advice and guidance helping local people to adapt to change.

## Areas for development

Self-evaluation is not yet embedded across all CLD partners. Although there are a few examples of practitioners reflecting on their practice and making improvements, partners are aware of the need to improve this further. Recent work with Development Officers from Education Scotland focusing on self-evaluation and continuous improvement has the potential to help establish a collective approach. Extending this approach across the CLD Collaborative should enable partners to better demonstrate their collective impact.

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

### Areas of positive progress

CLD partners are at an early stage of gathering and analysing data across all areas of their work. The Data Sub Group's development of a data dashboard has the potential to improve access to information for assessing need within local communities, although it not yet fully embedded. The Mental Health and Wellbeing project has refined the gathering and use of data. As a result, partners are making more effective use of youth work outcomes and stakeholder feedback to measure progress and inform future planning. Similarly, gathering and recording of data by the Adult Learning and Employability Service is strong and demonstrates analysis over time. The Adult Learning and Employability Service makes good use of local demographic information and labour market information to inform the employability offer.

CLD partners provide a wide range of effective opportunities to improve life chances and support learners to thrive, succeed and learn new skills. This is helping to support participants' social, emotional and physical wellbeing. For example, the well-established Mental Health and Wellbeing Project uses a targeted approach to support children and young people across all communities. This is increasing their confidence, resilience and reducing barriers to learning. Partners collaborate well to increase the involvement of youth voice in planning services. This is leading to increased shared study spaces in schools and improved connections across curricular areas. As a result, children and young people have access to a wider range of targeted support to help improve outcomes.

The focus in the CLD Plan on addressing inequalities is making a positive difference to local communities. Improved partnership working is leading to the emergence of new groups and improvements to services. Partners are working together to develop new methods of tackling food insecurity. This is reducing stigma and building resilience amongst local people. Improving access to digital devices in rural areas and supporting older people to engage with new technology is starting to build confidence amongst learners and communities.

Across learning programmes, almost all participants are gaining new knowledge and skills. Young people and adults have access to well-developed pathways, helping them to achieve their potential. Local employability partners work effectively to ensure that learners are supported to move between a range of learning opportunities to best suit their learning needs and aspirations. Additional support is provided to young people undertaking Modern Apprenticeships (MAs). This is reducing barriers to participation and increasing their skills for learning, life and work. As a result, almost all learners engaged in MAs secure employment within the council or are supported into positive destinations. The Inclusion Programme identifies the needs of marginalised people in their communities. This is leading to positive and sometimes life changing outcomes for individuals. The Thrive to Keep Well programme is

producing very strong, life changing outcomes for a broad range of participants. The Adult Achievement Award is used well to recognise and celebrate success.

### Areas for Development

The range of data gathering approaches in use across CLD services in Stirling varies across youth work, adult learning and capacity building. CLD partners should agree and implement a robust, common approach to data collection and analysis that fully captures all areas of their work.

### 3. Practice worth sharing more widely

The Adult Protection Reporting Harm Protocol sets out clearly the expected actions of staff and key partners in relation to reporting possible harm. CLD staff use the protocol well to identify adults in need of support and protection as well as protecting the public from possible harm. This is particularly important in the post COVID-19 period where increasing numbers of vulnerable adults are in need of support.

### 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.

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