

Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

Dumfries and Galloway Council

19 March 2024

1. Context

HM Inspectors visited Dumfries and Galloway Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during January 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

Strategic leadership across all aspects of CLD in Dumfries and Galloway is highly effective. Leaders provide good governance to oversee the delivery of the CLD plan, which is aligned well to the local authority's Local Outcome Improvement Plan. Partners are clear about the purpose of the CLD Partnership and work well together to deliver on shared CLD priorities. This includes those CLD priorities that feature in the work of several Community Planning Partnership (CPP) thematic groups and a wide range of strategies. Almost all CLD partners and staff at all levels have a clear sense of direction. CLD reporting on progress to the CPP and to communities is clear, succinct and demonstrates very good progress towards aims and objectives set out in the CLD plan.

CLD leaders and staff make very good use of local, national and international research to inform improvement across all aspects of CLD practice. At all levels of CLD, use of self-evaluation arrangements amongst partners, staff and volunteers is strong and well-embedded. This is underpinned by clear and measurable objectives in almost all areas of CLD. Recording and reporting arrangements are understood well by almost all partners, staff and volunteers. At both strategic and local levels, partners and community members are actively involved in the planning and delivery of CLD. For example, community members with lived experience of poverty and disadvantage are represented very well on a range of strategic and CPP groups. Their contribution is valued and is helping to inform appropriate targeting of shared resources. Overall, there is a shared understanding of priorities for the development and delivery of CLD across Dumfries and Galloway.

CLD staff and volunteers are supported well to review and reflect on their own and others practice. They are clear about the skills required to deliver good quality provision and demonstrate CLD values. They engage regularly in the planning and delivery of effective training and workforce development through, for example, participation in a Practitioners Collective. As a result, they are increasing their skills, knowledge and confidence to lead other aspects of CLD priorities. A highly effective and well-embedded youth work staff and volunteer pathway is providing a route to achievement of a range of qualifications. This model is continuing to increase the capacity of the CLD workforce to respond to identified need.

Areas for development

Arrangements for reporting on the progress of CLD to the wide range of strategic groups, including the CPP, is overly complex and difficult to navigate. A more streamlined approach to reporting would help to minimise duplication and support improved sharing of progress with communities.

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

Areas of positive progress

CLD leaders, partners and staff at all levels make very good use of findings from the '10,000 Voices' consultation report. A consultation carried out with young people, where over half the young people in the area shared their views. This, alongside other quantitative and qualitative data, is used well to inform local and strategic decision making and is contributing to the improved targeting of collective resources to areas of greatest need. Reporting on progress towards national key performance indicators produced by Community Learning and Development Managers Scotland is providing a baseline and evidence of improving trends over time. For example, it shows that engagement with young people and adults is returning to pre-pandemic levels. CLD partners work together well to share and discuss performance information regularly and use this to influence the development of priorities in their own organisations.

There is an increasing range of multi-disciplinary work taking place locally and strategically. CLD partners are working better together to identify and remove barriers to participation and target shared resources to those that need them most. For example, the Fed Up Café, provides vulnerable community members with access to services and activities to help to tackle food poverty and social isolation. As a result, those accessing provision are increasing their social networks and improving their mental health and wellbeing. The project board for resettlement of New Scots is structured well with clearly defined workstreams including third sector partners. This approach is enhancing the learning experience of New Scots. Similarly, whole family support and early intervention approaches are providing families with access to a range of free parenting programmes. As a result, parents and carers are using their new knowledge and skills to support their children at home and with their school work. Very well-developed arrangements are in place to support Community Asset Transfers (CAT). As a result, over 90 CATs have taken place.

Young people benefit from access to youth work services and well-developed learner pathways. As a result, an increasing number of young people are progressing into leadership roles. These include, volunteering, regional youth council or youth parliament representatives. They are improving interpersonal skills and increasing their social networks locally, nationally and internationally. This highly effective 'grow your own' approach in Dumfries and Galloway is increasing significantly the staff capacity of youth work services. The youth work offer across schools is strong and effective. This is contributing to an increase in young people's attendance, attainment and life chances. Most adults are accessing learning opportunities that meet their individual needs. This is helping to improve their skills and confidence in the use of digital technology and is having a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. A few adult learners are progressing towards accredited qualifications. CLD staff have a good understanding of the needs of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners and tailor programmes to their needs. As a result, an increasing number of ESOL learners are gaining employment and participating in the International English Language Testing System. Their community network is expanding, which is supporting community integration. Volunteers are recognised and highly valued for their positive contribution to the delivery of CLD across Dumfries and Galloway.

Areas for development

Too many adult learners do not have individual learning plans, which is impacting on their understanding of the progress they are making. Too few adults engaged in learning are achieving accreditation. CLD leaders should consider progression pathways which include, where appropriate, accreditation to support learners to evidence progress in their learning.

3. Practice worth sharing more widely

- a. The delivery of support to young people experiencing low level mental health issues in schools is highly effective in improving life chances. Young people have increased their knowledge of strategies to help them cope with issues such as bereavement and trauma. They are more positive about the future and are engaging in out of school activities. Young people value the support from youth work staff to develop strategies to manage personal issues. They see the positive benefits of separating mental health and wellbeing support from class teaching.
- b. Community organisations who are working towards a CAT or who have achieved a CAT are supported well, by partners, to develop and progress. Dumfries and Galloway Council is using a web based tool designed to measure social value. This is beginning to demonstrate the potential impact of CAT's. A few of the CATs such as, the Kirkcudbright Development Trust, Dumfries MidSteeple and Catherine Street Inclusive Play Park are achieving awards and national recognition of their positive impact on their communities.
- c. A strong and effective youth work service, staff and volunteer pathway is embedded well. It provides a route to access qualifications ranging from a personal development award in youth work to degree level qualifications. As a result, this model continues to increase the capacity of the CLD youth work workforce, to adapt and respond well to change.

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 aspects of highly effective practice which we would like to explore further.

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19 March 2024